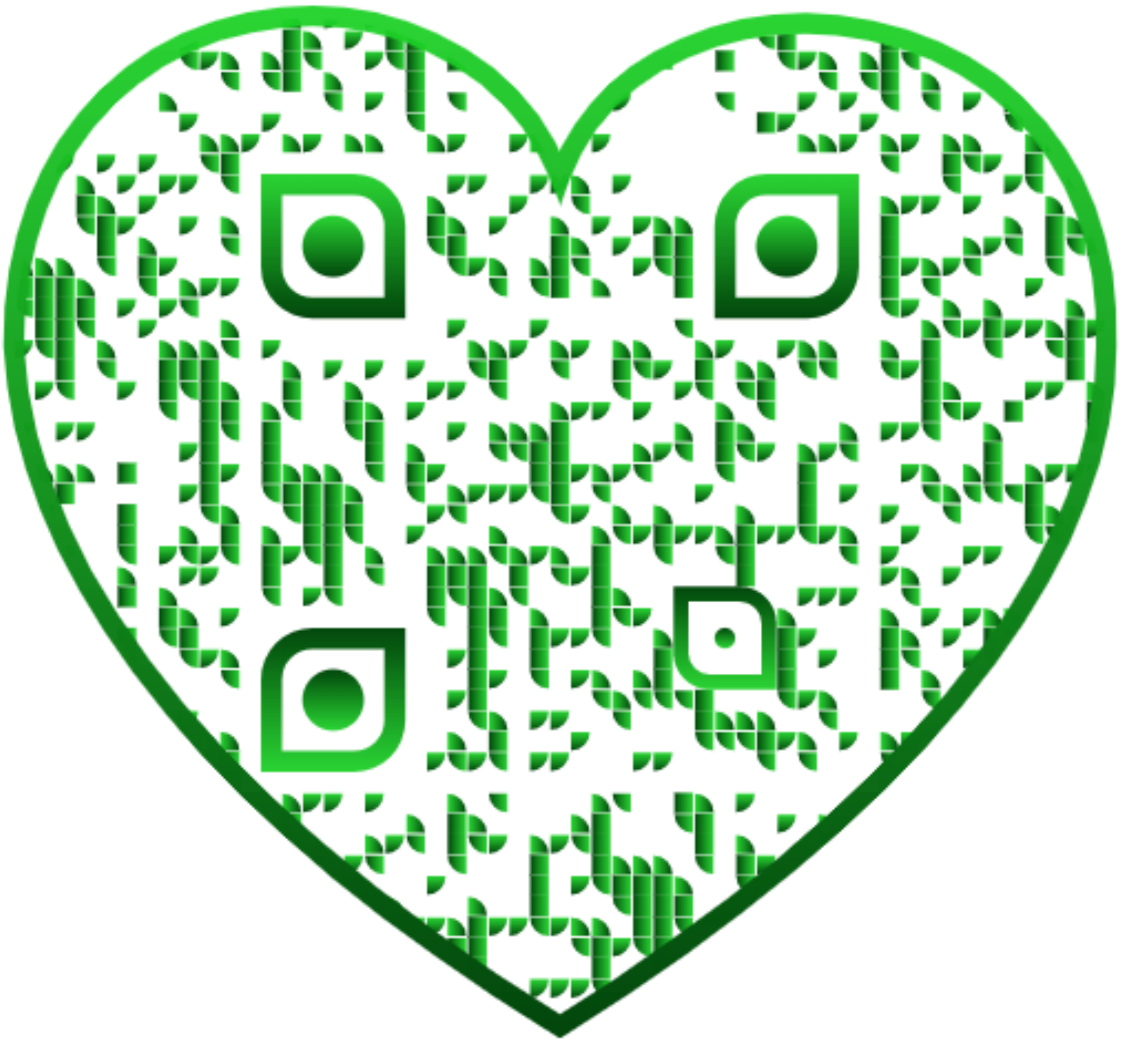
Judas Priest

Heavy Metal Painkillers

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

MARTIN POPOFF



Judas Priest

A MARTIN POPOFF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Riff Kills Man: 25 Years of Recorded Hard Rock and Heavy Metal (Power Chord Press, 1993)

The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal (Collector's Guide Publishing, 1997)

Goldmine Heavy Metal Records Price Guide (Krause Publications, 2000)

20th Century Rock 'n' Roll — Heavy Metal (Collector's Guide Publishing, 2000)

Southern Rock Review (Collector's Guide Publishing, 2002)

The Top 500 Heavy Metal Songs of All Time (ECW Press, 2003)

The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal Volume 1: The Seventies (Collector's Guide Publishing, 2003)

The Top 500 Heavy Metal Albums of All Time (ECW Press, 2004)

Blue Öyster Cult: Secrets Revealed! (Metal Blade Records, 2004)

Contents Under Pressure: 30 Years of Rush at Home & Away (ECW Press, 2004)

The New Wave of British Heavy Metal Singles (Scrap Metal, 2004)

UFO: Shoot Out the Lights (Metal Blade, 2005)

Rainbow: English Castle Magic (Metal Blade, 2005)

The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal Volume 2: The Eighties (Collector's Guide Publishing, 2005)

Dio: Light Beyond the Black (Metal Blade, 2006)

Black Sabbath: Doom Let Loose (ECW Press, 2006)

Run for Cover: The Art of Derek Riggs (Aardvark Publishing, 2006)

Ye Olde Metal: 1968 to 1972 (Power Chord Press, 2007)

The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal Volume 3: The Nineties (Collector's Guide Publishing, 2007)

Judas Priest: Heavy Metal Painkillers (ECW Press, 2007)

See www.martinpopoff.com for more information.

Judas Priest

Heavy Metal Painkillers

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

MARTIN POPOFF

ECW Press

Copyright © Martin Popoff, 2007

Published by ECW PRESS
2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4E 1E2

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form by any process — electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording, or otherwise — without the prior written permission
of the copyright owners and ECW PRESS.

Judas Priest: Heavy Metal Painkillers is not authorized by Judas Priest or its management.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Popoff, Martin, 1963–
Judas Priest : heavy metal painkillers : an illustrated history / by Martin Popoff.

ISBN-10: 1-55022-784-X
ISBN-13: 978-1-55022-784-0

1. Judas Priest (Musical group)—Interviews. 2. Heavy metal
(Music)—England—History and criticism. I. Title.

ML421.J92P829 2007 782.42166'092'2 C2007-903487-X

Managing editor: Crissy Boylan
Cover and Text design: Tania Craan
Back cover photo: Chris Casella
Cover image: Fin Costello/Redferns
Cover background: Diana Walters / istockphoto.com
Typesetting: Tania Craan and Mary Bowness
Production: Rachel Brooks
Printing: Transcontinental

The publication of *Judas Priest: Heavy Metal Pain Killers* has been generously supported by the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP), and with the assistance of the OMDC Book Fund, an initiative of the Ontario Media Development Corporation.

Canada

DISTRIBUTION

CANADA: Jaguar Book Group, 100 Armstrong Avenue, Georgetown, ON, L7G 5S4
UNITED STATES: Independent Publishers Group, 814 North Franklin Street,
Chicago, IL 60610

PRINTED AND BOUND IN CANADA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Photo Credits viii

Introduction ix

1 "IT WAS CHALK AND CHEESE, REALLY" 1

– The Early Years

2 "IT USED TO BAFFLE PEOPLE." 15

– *Rocka Rolla*

3 "GOD WILL CRUCIFY YOU! DON'T SEE THIS BAND!" 25

– *Sad Wings of Destiny*

4 "COME ON LADS, LET'S GO HAVE A DRINK" 41

– *Sin After Sin*

5 "WE JUST SET OUT TO WRITE THE FASTEST TRACK EVER WRITTEN" 57

– *Stained Class*

6 "HERE WE ARE, THE ULTIMATE METALHEADS" 65

– *Hell Bent for Leather*

7 "THERE WILL ALWAYS BE RUMORS" 81

– *Unleashed in the East*

8 "THE ROBOT SCYTHES AND THE LASER-BEAMING HEARTS AND THE MOLTEN BREATH" 91

– *British Steel*

9 "ROB SET HIS BOOTS ON FIRE" 111

– *Point of Entry*

10 **"WHEN YOU HIT THAT CONTINENT, IT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOU"** 125
– *Screaming for Vengeance*

11 **"PEOPLE DO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO IT AS A RECORDED RECORD"** 141
– *Defenders of the Faith*

12 **"FLOWERS DIDN'T GROW IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD"** 161
– *Turbo*

13 **"WE'LL ALWAYS PLAY TO THAT SAME ONE MILLION PEOPLE"** 179
– *Priest . . . Live!*

14 **"PNEUMATIC FINGERS AND LASER RAYS"** 189
– *Ram it Down*

15 **"THERE YOU GO"** 203
– *Painkiller*

16 **"IF HE TATTOOS THIS WAY, HE'S GOT TO BE A KILLER BASS PLAYER"** 225
– Fight

17 **"PAINKILLER TIMES TWO"** 241
– *Jugulator*

18 **"A LOT OF STRENGTH AND CHARACTER, THANKS TO THOSE TWO GUYS"** 255
– Glenn Tipton

19 **"LICORICE ROOT IN CAPLET FORM"** 263
– *'98 Live Meltdown*

20 **"ACTION/REACTION, POSITIVE/NEGATIVE"** 269
– Two

21 **"THIS IS WHERE ALL THE BEST THINGS HAPPEN FOR ME"** 279
– Halford

22 **"FIVE YEARS FIGHTING OUR WAY BACK UP"** 311
– *Demolition*

23 **"OK, I CAN LIVE WITH THIS"** 323
– *Live in London*

24 **"WE'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP OUR TESTICLES NEXT YEAR"** 331
– *Angel of Retribution*

25 **"IN HAPPY METAL LAND"** 369
– Epilogue

Notes on Select Images 376
Discography 377
Sources 379

PHOTO CREDITS

A bunch of cool Priest fans, many of whom I'd now call friends, provided invaluable visual assistance with this project. The Priest 'n' Popoff Hall Aflame now features realistic wax likenesses of the following:

Crissy Boylan — Crucial to making my Sabbath book come alive, she's been instrumental here as well, locating cool stuff resulting in the explosion of color you see before you. The good folks that helped her with this book include: Allan Atkins (his book, covering the early years of Priest, *Dawn of the Metal Gods*, is due out in 2008), Rebekah B, David Bridge, Leah Burlington, Dion DeTora, Eduardo Grief, Ken Hower, Sean Langlands, Steven J. Messina, Brian Monteiro, Meghan Newton, Zach Petersen, Simon Phillips, Chris "Stew" Stewart, and Edmund Varuolo.

Chris Casella — Vital, top-flight working photographer and provider of some Priest shots. www.casellaphoto.com

John Chronis — All-around good guy and provider of some key '80s memorabilia.

Rich Galbraith — Legendary photog from Oklahoma. Rich is a blast and an addictive email penpal, and has a classic rock archive to die for.

Mark Gromen — Ah yes, the Gromenator. Mark's a longtime bud and coworker at our mag *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. Takes a lot of pictures for us including, fortunately, of Halford and Co. Encyclopedic metal knowledge.

Dave Hogue — Studious Priest collector and expert on the more recent years of the band. Provided posters from his archive, for shooting by Dave Wright.

Gregory Olma — Again, capable bringer of Priest shots.

James Powell — Consider this a coffee table book of James' plush and prodigious Priest collection, 'cos that's sorta what it is. Jim spent countless hours arranging, scanning and then — don't forget — putting everything back into the Heavy Metal Basement. (Yes, buy the DVD of *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* and there's a feature on Powell's collection!) I made a fun visit to him in Baltimore where he graciously delivered the goods, defended the faith, and rocked this book like a hurricane . . . wait, wrong band.

Warren Weaver — Warren generously provided shots he took of the band in Chicago, circa 1979, a nice vintage collection that is much appreciated.

Michael Westbrook — He generously provided sweet photos from the band's visit to the Baltimore Civic Centre in 1981.

Dave Wright — Dave cheerfully and skillfully shot most of the memorabilia you see in here. He was meticulous with his set-up and dang well just wanted to see it done up right. He also has a gorgeous Maiden collection and is just an all-round music and metal collector 'n' fan and interesting guy.

INTRODUCTION

Despite my mixed feelings about some things they might have done later in their career, Judas Priest will always be metal gods to me. Their situation, their legacy . . . man, it's like winning the Super Bowl or being the president of the United States. In both cases, you have joined a club. Super Bowl . . . it's kind of cool. It's less important that you've formed a dynasty, or what a player's personal stats were, but it's of utmost importance that you were there and won, even once — you are in the club, a winner forever, your franchise successful. President — well, the cool thing there is that they call you "President" forever, i.e. long after you've left the job.

What's this got to do with Halford, Tipton, Downing, Hill and . . . Binks? Well, like I say, they can forever exhibit any number of shortcomings, and I'll still bow to the gods. And this is precisely for one reason. Priest is responsible, in my opinion, for the unassailably greatest run — or vein, or dynasty — of metal classics ever, namely 1976's *Sad Wings of Destiny* through 1979's *Hell Bent for Leather*. And we're not just talking really damn good albums here. *British Steel* is a damn good album, so is *Back in Black*, so is *Reign in Blood*. No, what we're talking about here is material that kicked metal up a notch or 12, not as much as a lone record like *In Rock* from 1970 did, or even say . . . oh, let's pick a duo like *Paranoid* and *Master of Reality*. Sure, it gets a little fuzzy. Yes, one can't diminish the import of all those subsequent Sabbath albums, or Rainbow's *Rising*, or on more micro levels, the songs "Virgin Killer," "Breadfan," "Fireball," or likely a couple dozen others. But for some reason I've always had it in my head, this gulf between 1970 and 1976, and that gulf ending at an immense wall of closely riveted chromium steel in 1976, when a speck of an unknown band in satin shirts delivered something called *Sad Wings of Destiny*, and in the power-chord process, changed metal forever.

And it didn't stop there — that's the beauty of it. That record rewrote the metal books, raising the bar for riffage and vocal prowess, injecting a slight prog element or at least vibe (Purple and Sabbath, I suppose, match the album for prog elements per se), but then *Sin After Sin* . . . well, bring in Simon Phillips and metal had just incredibly compacted, intensified and gotten smarter yet again, a mere year after *Sad Wings* and its resulting blank stares, but for the perceptive. *Stained Class* offered — now superhumanly — another increase in note density, drama and precision, matching its predecessor for unsafe speeds (made safe by this great band). Finally (and lamentably, as you will see argued later in this book), *Killing Machine* (retitled *Hell Bent for Leather* in America), found the band creating the perfect marriage between their mensa metal magic and a certain carnal metal commercialism. It is the band's crux album — like *Roots*, like *Reign in Blood*, like *Ride the Lightning* — a convergence of two worlds with

explosive synergistic results. Yea and verily, despite the pioneering, brave and immense music-creating of the previous three records, this one is the favorite in my heart, because it is the work of a Priest no longer prim.

I've long since started to rankle at telling anybody what is best for them — a best album, this one is bad, etc. — so yes, I'm telling you now my particular interaction with Priest and Priest's records. And from the above, it's a bit nutty and off the norm, although there are actually quite a number of us forever changed by one of those '70s records — more important than this lowly critic, rockers who were influenced to achieve and change metal in the next decade. Sure, many an old schooler will tell you *Sad Wings* is the best, but if you took an aggregate of 'bangers of all ages, *British Steel* is the best, second place sometimes going to *Screaming for Vengeance*. But the beauty of Priest's career is that it's been long and varied. You've come of many different ages listening to this band. If you are a young raging metalhead . . . well, tons of you out there think *Painkiller* is the band's best album. Shameless children of the hair-band era love *Turbo* for its happy friendliness. I'm sure looking back in ten years, there will be those who were 17 at the time who swear by *Angel of Retribution*, or even those of a rebellious naysayer disposition who clang most convincingly to the memory of the Ripper Owens–era albums (although I ain't met one of those yet).

In any event — and this is me talking again — I personally think desperation and a desire to make a bloody career out of this insufferable life so far caused the band to dumb down all over *British Steel*. This marked a slide in my relationship with the band. Sure, I've been mostly a very loyal fan since 1980 for almost all of the years after, but in my eyes, Priest were no longer innovators, no longer supermen. They were, on and off, making good-to-great records that contributed to the metal community, but would no longer be held up as examples of the best we had to offer. Metallica would take over with *Ride the Lightning* in '84, making that godly record and then repeating themselves positively on *Master of Puppets*, sliding after that, but thankfully making records that were different from each other. Pantera would cause the next pronounced and prominent Richter blip with 1990's *Cowboys from Hell*, and I don't know if we've ever had a too, too obvious metal stormbringer that has unarguably really raised the ante since.

So, back to that original premise. I literally see 1970 as the first cardio spike: *Black Sabbath*, *Paranoid*, *In Rock*. I see 1984 as another, 1990 as another. But in between, man, there is Priest arriving from utter obscurity (and then incredibly, tragically, unjustly, staying there for a long, long time), bringing *Sad Wings of Destiny* in '76, *Sin After Sin* in '77, *Stained Class* in '78 and *Hell Bent for Leather* in '79. Do you see what I'm getting at? Priest had four goddamn blips, and for that — like a Super Bowl champion and a president — they are winners forever, despite missteps, despite, well, never leading in earnest ever again.

And here's their story — sort of. Like all of my bios, what follows is more a look at the band's albums, song by song, comments where obtainable, using my many interviews with the guys over the years plus some outside press. Let me tell you, Priest can be a frustrating band to interview. Without exception, every single member of the present band — Rob, Glenn, K.K., Ian and Scott — are exceedingly cautious and decorous about what they say. Even the most innocuous question can scare them into a long-winded response of very little substance. I'm not sure how I want you to take that, for the guys are unfailingly polite, good-natured, but . . . let me give you two examples. I asked K.K. about what would be more of a K.K. song, writing-wise, versus a Glenn song. You know, the credits are pretty democratic so you can't really tell. The fans would like to know. No big whoop . . . it might be idle fun to try to spot each of their personalities in a few Priest classics. He wouldn't answer — "it wouldn't be fair" or something like that. Second example — Rob says "it would be unethical" to talk about Halford in a Priest interview or vice versa. First guy I ever talked to who ever told me something like that. Not very loose, not very rock 'n' roll. I have many, many examples of questions I thought were pretty soft that prompted dodged responses or generalities, or most aggravatingly, stacks and stacks of metal clichés, many of which will unfortunately show up in the following pages, in part because I want you to get a sense of the guys, especially Rob who can amuse with his pomp and circus pants, charm you, but fill up a sentence with far too much fluff!

Which brings up another point — and the guys admit this — they really don't remember. Some of what I think is dodging is simply an honest "I don't recall" to a geeky fanboy question that could be eight layers away from them possibly dredging a cogent response. I found myself constantly reminded of this and over the years, have tried to ask things differently, or ask questions that I figured might lead them into remembering. Still, I've all too often put the phone down after a 20-minute Priest chat thinking there was absolutely nothing of use there.

Urgh. In any event, that's my Priest interview rant. I love the guys, always will, but I wish they'd loosen up a bit. Rob's a gay heavy metal rocker covered in studs and leather for Christ's sake — you'd think he could be a bit more adventuresome in what he says. I mean, he's lived an interesting life. Anyway, enough. Read on, celebrate this long and determined career with me, one fortunately marked by not one, but at least two goodly runs at success — one creative and then a couple of years later, one commercial.

Martin Popoff
martinp@inforamp.net

1

"IT WAS CHALK AND CHEESE, REALLY"

– The Early Years

Like Sabbath, like Trapeze and like half of Led Zeppelin, Judas Priest struggled to life under the grey, metal-clanked skies of Birmingham — the black country — smack in the middle of the U.K., just far enough from easier rock 'n' rolling London to cause a loud lack of hope.

It has often been said — eloquently and often by all of Priest and all of Sabbath — that Birmingham, by its very nature, breeds heavy metal. Steel, car parts, burning rubber, metal stamping, tool and die, and early death from blackened lungs . . . it's all wrapped up like a fist and a cyst smack at the heart of industrial Britain, and it was often the prime motivator to come up with something — anything — to get a handsome young man out from under the yoke that cursed his kinfolk. Often, that "anything" was heavy metal, a musical form forged to compete with the factory

I CAME FROM A REAL BROKEN HOME SITUATION SO I GUESS YOU BECOME A BIT OF A REBEL . . . YOU EITHER BECOME A HEAVY METAL GUITAR PLAYER OR YOU END UP IN JAIL!

rhythms banging already throbbing heads, always in the background, always a reminder of a life of toil and doom.

"People talk about it all the time," muses Judas Priest guitarist K.K. Downing, on the Birmingham vibe. "It definitely was a very industrial place and wasn't the most pleasant place to grow up. Personally, I came from a real broken home situation so I guess you become a bit of a rebel . . . you either become a heavy metal guitar player or you end up in jail! [laughs] Obviously, you want to express your aggression and I think, subconsciously, I kind of perceive the guitar as an instrument, but not necessarily a musical instrument. It's like a gun substitute. When you look at it, it can be a weapon of sorts. Personally, I get as much enjoyment out of looking at a guitar and holding it as I would actually playing it. Is that weird? Is that perverse, or what?! It definitely is weird."

Incredibly, the original lineup of one lot striving to escape such toil, Judas Priest, back in 1969, not only included no one who is in the band now, but in fact, no one who would record the first Judas Priest album, *Rocka Rolla*, five years later in 1974. The band Alan Eade of Ace Management had on his hands consisted of Ernest Chataway on guitar, Brian "Bruno" Stapenhill on bass, John "Fezza" Partridge on drums, and one Alan John Atkins on vocals, Atkins being the prime vestige of Priest history to leave his mark on the band as we know it, having written songs that would show up on both *Rocka Rolla* and 1976's *Sad Wings of Destiny*.

It was in fact Atkins and Stapenhill who had formed the band in West Bromwich, on the outskirts of Birmingham. Chataway got the guitar post after the guys searched out a replacement for John Perry, who had been killed in an automobile accident. Chataway had won the job over one Kenneth Downing Jr., who later claimed to have been a little overly ambitious at the time, having only played through an actual amplifier five or six times at that point. K.K. would recall seeing the band's old van tearing down the road with Judas Priest emblazoned on the side, thinking, "What a cool name; I wish I was in that band."

Ernest Chataway was a mere 17 years old, but could play guitar, keyboards and harmonica, having sat in with Black Sabbath on the latter early on, when they were known as Earth. Atkins and Stapenhill had been around the block, having played with the Bitta Sweet, Sugar Stack (also featuring Partridge), Blue Condition (Al calls this "the real Priest predecessor") and the Jug Blues Band. In 1969, Atkins was asked to join Evolution, but was dismayed when a three-month tour of Morocco was proposed, for which Atkins was also to drive the tour bus. He balked, and tried to get back with the Jugs, but that was not to be. Ergo, the Priest beckoned.

With regard to picking Judas Priest as a name, Al says that "Bruno, the bass guitarist in Judas Priest #1, came up with the idea when looking for something similar to the Black Sabbath name which we liked at the time." He

got it from a Bob Dylan album called *John Wesley Harding* — the song was "The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest." The curious moniker can be looked upon as a mild exclamation, or the duality of good and bad, Judas being a betrayer of Christ, a priest being a proponent thereof. Just on its own, the religious tone of the name carried a sort of ominous weight. And moreover, nods to Black Sabbath in its choosing are multiple and profound. In later years, K.K. would quip that in the '80s metal names were all about dungeons and demons, but in the '70s, the hot set-up was graveyards and religion.

Judas Priest at this point was going for a bluesy yet progressive rock sound, also covering the likes of Quicksilver Messenger Service and Spirit. Eade had prompted the band to record a demo, consisting of Atkins' "Good Time Woman" and "We'll Stay Together," which garnered some interest from Immediate (the much-lauded label run by Rolling Stones manager Andrew "Loog" Oldham) and Harvest, the latter of which, along with Vertigo, was to figure prominently in British art rock history. A showcase band wars–type gig in Walsall (November 25, 1969, the band's very first show, attended by Robert Plant!) resulted in a three-year record deal with Immediate, but it was not to be, as the label ended up closing shop two months later.

The band toured into 1970 but then split, all but Alan moving out of town. Late in that year, Alan had discovered a young band rehearsing a form of louder and faster rock, something he'd wanted to explore, inspired in the main by Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. In the band were Downing, drummer John Ellis, and bassist Ian Frank Hill (otherwise known as Skull), but no singer. The rehearsal complex was called Holy Joe's, or by some, Joe's Place (run by one Father Husband), and it was in a converted Church of England school frequented by many local Midlands bands, due, recalls K.K., to its five-shilling price and the fact that you could turn up as loud as you wanted. Rockers using the facility included Slade, Trapeze and Robert Plant. Downing remembered his own audition for Atkins' old band, plus he knew Atkins as a locally famous musician, as well as a talented singer, drummer, guitarist and writer. All told, he was more than glad to have Atkins as part of the group.

WHAT A COOL NAME;

I WISH I WAS IN THAT BAND.

"It was literally run by a vicar," explains K.K. "There was a church over the road, and like in England, a lot of those things were kind of combined. You would have your school, sometimes with the church attached to the school, if not just in close proximity. Which is a really important part in, certainly, Victorian times and centuries gone by, where children would actually go to church to say Mass in the morning, and have assembly in the church, and events at Christmas time, Easter, harvest times . . . very important. So it was that type of setup. It was really run down, deserted, but the vicar was still there in the vicar's house, or the vicarage. So he would try to make some money for the upkeep of the building, even though the rooms were deserted. So he thought, 'I know what I'll do. I'll rent these school rooms out to bands so they can rehearse.' He probably didn't think about that straight away, but maybe a band knocked on his door one day and said,

THE BIG JUMP WAS ASKING OURSELVES, 'DO WE QUIT OUR JOBS OR DO WE KEEP IT AS A HOBBY?'

'Could we rehearse here?' But we would just go down there every night, five or six bands rehearsing. A racket it must've been as well, with the acoustics of school rooms in those days, all that glass. But the vicar would come around to collect his money while we were playing. Often he would go straight to the pub which was just down the corner. But yes, Slade was one of the bands, pop band huge here in the '70s. And they used to actually pull up with an articulated wagon with their gear in it."

K.K.'s young band quickly dropped their Freight moniker and went with Al's Judas Priest. Al had checked with his ex-bandmates first, and had no problem convincing Ken of the name's merit, Downing still quite enamored with the important vibe of the name, in fact going so far as to call it the best thing that happened to the band. A few months later, Priest began playing around the area, opening for the likes of Slade, Budgie and Gary Moore, covering Hendrix's "Spanish Castle Magic" and Quatermass' "Black Sheep of the Family," oddly, the song that got Ritchie Blackmore and Ronnie James Dio together and on their way toward forming Rainbow. K.K. recalls that his and Ian's very first gig with the band, March 6, 1971, was in front of 60 to 70 people, and that their take on the night was six pounds. Four months later the band played their first show in London, which K.K. says turned out to be a major letdown, describing its location as "a shed at the back of a pub."

Calling their brand of music "goodan-loud," Judas Priest ended up cutting a demo in July of '71 at the suggestion of their new manager David Corke. "Holy Is the Man" and "Mind Conception" were recorded at Zella Records, home also of Black Sabbath's first demos. Atkins recalls the session as a bit of a cock-up, claiming to have had a sore throat and to have been stoned, also lamenting the live-with-no-overdubs rawness of the recording. Both of these songs can be heard in re-recorded form on Atkins' fourth solo album, 1998's *Victim of Changes*, with "Mind Conception" transformed into a modern heavy metal rocker — like hard hair metal, even power metal — and "Holy Is the Man" pulsing with some of the original's funk, but still unrecognizably heavy-handed.

By the close of the year, drummer John Ellis would be replaced by Alan "Skip" Moore — John's last gig would turn out to be October 6th of '71, with Moore picking up the sticks for a show the following week. "I had a job and John had a job," recalls Ian Hill, remembering John quitting the band, telling his version of the band's murky early rumblings. "There was actually a band called Judas Priest before us. They were together for about 18 months before us, but then they split up. Their vocalist was walking past the rehearsal room one day and asked us if we wanted a vocalist. None of us could really hold a tune so we took him on. We couldn't think of a name, and to make a long story short, we just called ourselves Judas Priest. We got well known in our local area in the Midlands. Suddenly people were wanting to see us 200 miles away. I had a job so I could only do it on weekends. The big jump was asking our-

selves, 'Do we quit our jobs or do we keep it as a hobby?' That was the crucial point. Ken and I quit our jobs and John, unfortunately, didn't."

"We have known each other since we were about five," remarks Hill with respect to K.K. Downing. "We were brought up in the same housing estate just outside of Birmingham. We weren't really friends until we were about 15 or 16 and first started to get into music. We were into progressive rock, which in those days was Cream, Jimi Hendrix, John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers and Fleetwood Mac. We had very, very similar tastes in music. It brought us together and we formed a band with John Ellis, another friend from school. But yes, we didn't have a vocalist in those days. We were just quite happy to go to rehearsal rooms and thrash out a few of our favorite songs."

Ian had discovered the bass through his father, who had played double bass himself. Sadly, Ian's dad passed away when Hill was only 15. His mother eventually remarried a carpenter, who helped Ian out by building some of his earliest bass cabinets. Ian's distinguished lot in life was cast when, having wrecked his car, he chose to spend the acquired insurance money on his first bass rather than replace his set of wheels. Previous to that, he had been plunking away at a guitar strung up with big fat bass strings.

That same year, 1972, also marked the composition of three tracks that would, two years hence, feature on *Rocka Rolla*, namely "Never Satisfied," "Winter" and "Caviar and Meths," the band's set closer, originally longer than the version that would show up on the album, sporting some additional impressive modern metal riffing. Atkins has proposed that a standard set list of the day might have run "Spanish Castle Magic," "Winter," "Holy Is the Man," "Voodoo Rag," "Black Sheep of the Family," "Never Satisfied," "Whiskey Woman," "Joey," "Mind Conception" and finally, "Caviar and Meths." Bands Priest had shared stages with up to this point included White Rabbit, Trapeze, Slade, Graphite, Supertramp, Bronco, and on one occasion, Black Sabbath.

Moore would shortly leave Priest for a local recording act called Sundance, before returning for *Sad Wings of Destiny*. With new drummer Christopher Louis "Congo" Campbell in tow (black, with a huge afro!), the band opened for the likes of Status Quo, Thin Lizzy and Family. The band was now working extensively, having hooked up with early Sabbath manager Jim Simpson, Tony Iommi, Norman Hood and their Iommi Management Agency, or I.M.A., who also had on their roster the Flying Hat Band, featuring Glenn Tipton. In January of '73, the company was now called Tramp Entertainments, but management stayed essentially the same, with Priest being handled by David Corke and Norman Hood.

At this juncture, Al Atkins would leave the band, citing the poor financial situation of playing gigs for ten pounds a night (later 25). "My third year with them became a money struggle," says Al. "I was the only one married, with a baby daughter, Sharon, to feed. The bigger we became, the more overheads we got, so we always ended up with little to no money at all."

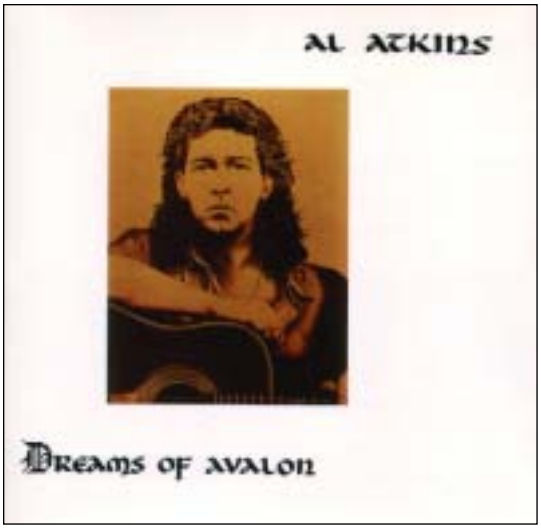
Al was also reticent to tour without an album to promote — he had been writing all the songs, and indeed asked by management to keep cranking them out. But an album deal never materialized, even though there was interest from Gull Records, who would eventually hook up with the band for their first two albums. Ian says that finances were so dire at times that they would send one of the gals in to charm a drink out of some pub patron, and

Al Atkins

then bring the drink out to the thirsty rockers. Ken would shake his head and say that after you'd paid off the van rental and the PA company, you'd be lucky enough to have enough for fish and chips that night. The guys would also pull into town and announce themselves as artists signed to Atlantic, landing the odd gig that way, including one at a Greek restaurant for 15 pounds and a bunch of food.

Atkins' last tour with the band was to be called the Heavy Thoughts tour, named after one of the new songs he had written, in and about the time he wrote "Whiskey Woman," which would morph into the Priest epic "Victim of Changes." "Heavy Thoughts" exists in unfinished demo form, and a version of it can be heard on Al's '03 solo album of the same name.

It is of note that Al admits to a certain amount of drug-taking — no big deal in the '70s — but otherwise tried to keep the band in tip-top shape, not even allowing girlfriends at rehearsals. "K.K. and Ian were with me for



about three years and were hard-working lads with one thing in mind — they are going to the top of the tree, no matter what. But still, I had to try to keep K.K., Ian and John, the drummer, focused on the band only. But John kept bringing his girlfriend everywhere with us, so I told him, 'You don't take your woman to work, so don't bring her again with us' and it didn't go down too well with him and he started mouthing off to me, so I threatened to beat him up. None of their girlfriends liked me because of this but I didn't give a shit. To me the main thing was the band — that's all."

Musing over the direction of the band, Atkins ventures that "at the beginning we played covers of bands like Quatermass and it all sounded very blues rock, but in Judas Priest #2, with K.K. and Ian, it started to get an edge to the sound, although we still played covers — even by Hendrix, would you believe? — then gradually added my songs to the list, like 'Mind Conception,' 'Never Satisfied,' 'Winter,' 'Caviar and Meths,' 'Whiskey Woman,' 'Joey,' 'Voodoo Rag' and 'Holy Is the Man.' It was at this time K.K. wrote his first ever song, 'Run of the Mill.' A lot of these songs featured on their debut album, *Rocka Rolla*. I myself wasn't aware of us being a metal band at the time. 'Heavy Thoughts' was one I only half-finished."

K.K. AND IAN WERE HARD-WORKING LADS WITH ONE THING IN MIND — THEY ARE GOING TO THE TOP OF THE TREE, NO MATTER WHAT.

Atkins would close out touring late into December of '72, with the reconfiguration of the band coming in winter/summer of '73, Rob Halford's first gigs with the band commencing in April of that year. By the end of the Atkins era, Priest had added as stagemates Freedom, Ace, Wild Angels, Burnt Oak, Dr. Ross, Gary Moore, Curved Air, Alf, Mahatma Kane Jeeves, Danta, Strife and Thin Lizzy. "Yes, we opened up for loads of top bands," recalls Atkins, "including Family . . . Roger Chapman was one of my heroes, plus Status Quo and Gary Moore, who was and still is my favorite guitar player."

So yes, Atkins would be replaced by the indomitable metal god Rob Halford, a mere mortal back in 1973. Campbell would also leave the band (as would roadie Keith Evans, who moved on to a job with AC/DC), with Ian and K.K. deciding to soldier on. Rob came from a band called Hiroshima, bringing with him his drummer John Hinch. Al eventually left his office job and returned to rock 'n' roll, touring until 1978 with a band called Lion, featuring his Priest cohort Brian Stapenhill along with Budgie drummer Pete Boot. Adds Al, "I almost joined Trapeze when Glenn Hughes left to go with Deep Purple. They were looking for a bass player and vocalist to replace him but I turned it down. And with regard to the Priest guys these days, we did a reunion meeting about five years ago for one of our old roadies to raise money for a charity he organized at the bar he had bought. I still phone Ian when he's in town, and I met up with them backstage at a gig last year."

K.K. is wont to tell the story of visiting the Halford household with Ian Hill (Ian is married to Rob's sister, Sue; Ken was dating her friend Carol Hiles), and hearing Rob (at that point Bob, and later Robert) do harmonies to Doris Day on the telly, Downing quite impressed with his trilling. Rob affirms the gist of the story, but won't cop to the idea that it was Doris Day, noting that K.K. is known to exaggerate. Later, Ken phoned Rob (once described as "stage lighting designer and would-be actor from Walsall") to come out for an audition. Here's where it gets confusing, as some reports have it that Rob was singing along to the radio, not the television, and that it was at K.K. and Ian's apartment, having already been called up for an audition.

Back to younger days, Rob was always superlative in the high school choir, forming his first band — with one of his teachers on guitar — called Thark, in 1966 at the age of 15. Rob also featured in a band called Abraxis, and then prog rockers Athens Wood, and he did indeed work the lights, for the Grand Theater in Wolverhampton, earning good money and causing consternation for his parents when he left to rock out. Also in an act called Lord Lucifer, Rob had a Francis Barnett motorcycle

with that name painted on the gas tank — Rob later recalled that parents would tuck their children away when he would drive by. But it was immediate Priest predecessor Hiroshima — on plate for about a year — that was closest to Halford's future esteemed role. Of note, and in fact somewhat analogous to the story of another metal god, Ronnie James Dio, Rob briefly played bass in the band when their erstwhile bassist Ian Charles was put on waivers.

In any event, a jam session took place at Holy Joe's, and Rob, having been previously impressed to the point of mesmerized with, in particular, K.K. Downing, was in the band, K.K. in turn having been impressed with Rob's harmonizing to radio — or TV — broadcasts, as well as his reputation on harmonica. John Hinch was also part of the deal, and after hours of discussing music and playing it, both were offered a job.

Hinch, in relating the story of joining Priest, recalls Rob as "a young chap, screaming and wailing for all he was worth. I felt that this guy was the man. He could do the business for us. So back in those days, there was always this sort of heavy political situation, backstabbing the other band, secret talks, and all very cloak and dagger. So anyway, that was when Rob joined our band. And that band was called Hiroshima. And off we went, did quite a number of gigs up and down the country, and it wasn't too successful. We weren't terribly happy with this band. It all fizzled out, and Rob and myself thought we would carry it on, and we would try to find other guys to join our band and go from there, still under the name Hiroshima. So we went to the Birmingham College of Food, and on the bill was a band called Judas Priest, and they were horrible. I mean, they were bad — hated them. There was this strutting lead guitarist, long blond hair, as I remember it, this sort of very thin bass guitarist standing stock still, and a black drummer, and I didn't really take any other notice of them other than that they were bad.

ON THE BILL WAS A BAND CALLED JUDAS PRIEST, AND THEY WERE HORRIBLE. I MEAN, THEY WERE BAD — HATED THEM.

"And as chance would have it, Ian Hill came from the same area as Rob Halford, and dated Rob's sister, and one day me and Rob were over there, just tinkering around, and in walked Ian Hill, or Skull as he was affectionately known. And he mentioned to us that the singer, Al Atkins, and the drummer, a guy called Congo, had left the band and they wanted replacements, and would we be interested in going to audition for Judas Priest? Rob and I discussed the matter, and felt that we really didn't want to be associated with this band, and if we did, we would certainly change the name. And anyway, we ended up at the rehearsal, went through all their songs; Rob could sort of sing a song he'd never heard before and just throw words in that happened to suit. And because the band had gotten a tour already lined up, as support to a band called Budgie, Rob and I thought, well, what have we got to lose, if it's going to put us out there? In time we'll take this band over and they'll become our band. Or, if it doesn't suit, we will carry on. So off we went on tour, after a few bitty sort of rehearsals. And by the end of the tour, which was three to four weeks long, we sort of molded into the Judas

Priest situation very nicely. Rob had successfully changed it, and from there, Dave Corke, if I'm right, was already in contact via Budgie with Gull Records, and got David Howells to come see us at a gig."

Recalls K.K. about Priest's friendship with Cardiff's finest, namely Budgie, "They were my big, big favorite band; I was a real big fan — great band. We used to do thirty-odd date tours with those boys. And even when we weren't on tour with them . . . I can remember one night, because we used to live together, me, and Ian, the bass player, this other school friend we had who used to get us some gigs, and two girls, living in a one-bedroom flat. So there were five of us. That's where I perfected the art of silent sex. Or, did I ever perfect it? One of the girls was my girlfriend. And occasionally, you would get a knock on the door in the middle of the night, and it would be Budgie, because they were from Cardiff which was quite a way south. So when they would be playing up north, Newcastle or something, often they would be too knackered to drive the rest of the way home. Knock on the door, pouring rain, there would be Burke Shelley standing there, 'Guys, can we crash on the floor for the night?' And of course we would do the same when we were down south. So they would often be there, and in the morning we would get up to get the guitars out of the van and jam a bit."

Rob also acknowledges that many great things happened for Priest because of Budgie, additionally citing bassist and singer Burke Shelley as "magic," a cool rock star who commanded the stage, a performer worth watching every night.

K.K. Downing's first song of record would be a beauty, "Run of the Mill" establishing a

levity that would carry the band beyond *Rocka Rolla* through to their classic *Sad Wings of Destiny* album. "Run of the Mill" would be recorded, along with Halford singing the old Atkins chestnut "Whiskey Woman." Halford's "Red Light Lady" would be added as a slow second-movement coda, turning the paste-up into "Victim of Changes," one of the all-time Priest classics. The demoing of "Run of the Mill" with "Whiskey Woman" would turn into the Gull Records deal, now and possibly forever a poisoned thorn in the leathered hides of Priest. Sealing the deal in principle was a showcase at the Marquee, February 11, 1974, with Priest in support of Budgie. Although K.K. figures the label and its leader David Howells didn't like the band's music, they saw potential due to the manic crowd reaction on display that night.

Leaving the U.K. for the first time, the band logged a few dates in Germany and the Netherlands (sleeping in their Mercedes van, despite it being winter), then back home, then over to Norway and Denmark (more sleeping in the van, now a Ford Transit), where a girl couldn't pronounce Downing's first name, coming up with K.K. instead, which has been his rock 'n' roll moniker ever since. Earlier in the Halford era, Priest notched their first extended support slot, accompanying Budgie on that band's *Never Turn Your Back on a Friend* tour through the summer of '73 and into early '74.

Priest arrived home from their Scandinavian sojourn to sign on the dotted line with Gull on April 16th. "We opted to pursue the deal," recalls Hinch. "We came down to London, to South Malton Street, and went into the burger bar across the road, and eventually signed the deal. And grabbed the money [laughs]. Which, wasn't a huge amount of money at that time, but from my business point of view, it was a lot of money. I mean, it enabled us to get a better PA, all sorts of things."

The band learned that Howells would prefer they fill out their sound a bit with another band member, something the guys were a bit wary of, simply due to the idea of splitting their slim pickings five ways instead of four. Howells figured that there were too many bands out there operating as a power trio with vocalist, and a keyboard player or even a sax player was suggested. Rehearsing one of the band's songs, it became apparent that a second guitarist would fit the bill best, with drummer John Hinch figuring the idea came from Howells and producer Rodger Bain. Downing was also quickly on board, liking what Wishbone Ash had pioneered with their twin guitar-solo sound, as well as pointing out that live, it sounded better if during a solo, there could be a rhythm guitar bed beneath it. Comments Hinch, "I have to say, it did work. Glenn joined the band, and as soon as Kenny became comfortable with him, it improved the music a great deal; it did fill the sound out. They managed to work out a lot of dual guitar runs, lead runs, I think, very, very effectively."

"We were familiar with Glenn from his band The Flying Hat Band," recalls Ian Hill, with respect to Glenn Tipton's fateful arrival. "We had been on the same circuit in Germany. Rob was with the band by then. It was the nucleus of the first recording band. We already had our deal with Gull Records. We were at a place called What's Music in Birmingham, and Glenn walked in, and out of the blue Ken went and asked him if he wanted to join the band. We were just standing there agog. After meeting us and having a couple of pints he said yes. He brought in another dimension to the band, and as the cliché goes, we have never looked back since. The only other twin lead at the time was Wishbone Ash. They were very lightweight compared to us. It was chalk and cheese, really. We were one of the first bands to have two lead guitars in a heavy rock format."

The Flying Hat Band was a power trio all set to record for Vertigo, however the label figured the band was too much like Black Sabbath — considerably heavy and doomy, in their eyes, although hard blues rock would be an apt descriptor — and put the project on ice, even though the guys were well on their way, having toured with Deep Purple. The Flying Hat Band's previous incarnations were Shave and Dry, and then Merlin. Tipton's early training was actually on piano (his mother's instrument), not guitar (his brother's), so some keyboards were supplied to his early bands, as well as lead vocals. Of course, this all came after his initial course of study, the plastic banjo at age six! Tipton had logged five hard years of work in one of Birmingham's notorious factory jobs, seemingly a rite of passage for a metal man, and had actually never picked up the guitar until he was 18 years old. He says that as an "energetic bloke," the piano had been a bit too confining and that one pleasant surprise he had discovered was how easily chords came to him on the guitar. Early influences such as B.B. King and Freddie King led to Jimi Hendrix, and at that point, his life had changed forever. The Flying Hat Band included Steve Palmer on drums (brother of another pretty good drummer, Carl!) and notably, Mars Cowling on bass, who would move on to critical acclaim and considerable fame with Pat Travers.

Speaking of guitar forerunners, K.K., for his part, says, "I've never really been influenced, other than in the early days. My two main influences were Hendrix and Rory Gallagher. Rory was great; I went to see him many times with Taste." K.K. has also said that much of his instruction came from guitar tab books on bands such as Led Zeppelin and the Beatles. Essentially self-taught, K.K. began at 16 on an acoustic he bought for ten pounds before picking up a used Richenbacher a year later. K.K. adds that he left home at the tender age of 17 in possession of no more than five or six chords, long hair, flared jeans and a prayer.

And so Priest was reborn (Tipton's first gig with the band was May 9, 1974), somewhat crucially with the help of producer Rodger Bain, who was house guy at Vertigo, and helping out with Priest now that the Flying Hat Band record he was to work on was stopped, with its lead guitarist and vocalist off to this new set of guys. Thus far, Rodger's big claim to fame was that he had produced the first three Black Sabbath albums, despite rude and crude tooling, coming up with three productions very different from each other, but each bulldozing in their own brutish manner.

Heavy metal synergy reared its head once again: an unknown by the name of Rod Smallwood — later Iron Maiden's manager — was an 18-month employee of London's MAM Agency, and wound up signing to the booking

group Be Bop Deluxe, Cockney Rebel, Golden Earring and Judas Priest.

"We were of course picking up fans, but we didn't know it at the time," muses Hinch, in the enviable position of getting to watch Priest grow from his perch on the drum riser. "A few people here or there that liked us, to a point, preferred us to Budgie. We came out at the end of that first tour, which was only a short tour, but it was successful. So after we had completed the initial tour, David Howells went about getting all sorts of work for us. We did pick up gigs ourselves, local gigs, as it were, but we really got into a very nice situation of working virtually every night; I would say on average we used to work 20 to 25 nights a month. There was no planning as such, as to where the gigs were, the routes and that. Literally one night we could be down in Penzance, and then up to Cromer, and Links Pavilion, the next. And then we might be up to Inverness. And I'm not just saying this as a windup; I mean literally up to Inverness, which was usually a two-day hike up through the Highlands and what not. And say, come back down for the Marquee the next night. It went on month in, month out.

"And though you didn't really realize it at the time, night in, night out, you are getting tighter and tighter. The band really began to gel. All along, you are picking up fans. We had some pretty dreadful nights with Priest, from the point of view of audiences. We would sort of come offstage and say, 'Let's just pack it in. It's a complete waste of time. It's not the music of today.' The whole band thought, 'we are never going to make it.' Sabbath had already been and done the heavy metal bit, although it wasn't known as heavy metal in those days.

"Having not, at that stage, released an album, we had no way of gauging how many people really liked the band. Later we managed to get on the Reading Festival, which was the big festival of its day. The first band went onstage to total abuse. I mean, they were literally bottled offstage. Things are being thrown . . . again, because it's the early days. There wasn't any restriction on taking glass bottles into gigs, so they were literally thrown onstage [laughs]. And they had to come off. So we were all sitting in our caravan, our dressing room, and dreading, I mean, very, very nervous about going onstage. And everyone would try to put a brave face on, and we went on, and the place exploded, rapturous applause, thought we were wonderful, couldn't go wrong, and we did, I think, a pretty good set. It went down, and I really think that that was one of the major starting points for Judas Priest."

ROCKA ROLLA

(Gull, September ’74)

Side 1

One for the Road
Rocka Rolla
Winter
Deep Freeze
Winter Retreat
Cheater

Side 2

Never Satisfied
Run of the Mill
Dying to Meet You
Caviar and Meths

2

"IT USED TO BAFFLE PEOPLE"

– Rocka Rolla

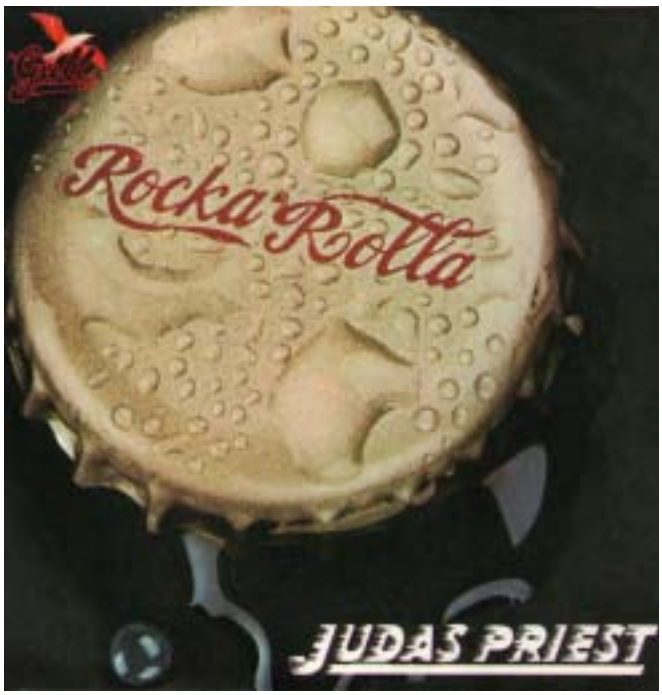
Judas Priest's debut album would only hint at the majesty to come, with little of the grand religious overtones the band would adopt one shocking step up the ladder later with *Sad Wings of Destiny*. First with the wrapper, Gull Records artist John Pasche would spin a rhyme with Coca-Cola into a cover concept, and then top it with a logo that would turn out to be used once and then discarded like a bottle top. Although the cover would be admired as an artistic piece, the band was none too pleased with it. (Mel Grant would later supply a rote and forgettable heavy metal illustration called *The Steel Tsar* for a reissue of the record in 1984.) Flip o'er to the back, and the Judas Priest bassist looks very much like the Black Sabbath drummer, "Bob" Halford is sporting long, blond hair and Glenn Tipton is looking amusingly distinguished behind a mustache.

IT WAS ALMOST A CONSCIO US EFFORT NOT TO SOUND LIKE ANYBODY ELSE.

Onto the music, and one found a band willing to be proggy, heavy, riffy, all sorts of things, even doomy, but not so concerned with the logic that makes commercial songs comfortable and thus saleable.

"Ken and Glenn did the lion's share of the music," says Ian, trying to grapple with the issue of the band's early influences. "But I don't think there were very many outside influences. I try not to, because it will show in my bass lines, and I'm sure it's the same for K.K. and Glenn. But we all liked Cream and Ken was a Hendrix freak — you always keep those. But it was almost a conscious effort not to sound like anybody else, and it used to baffle people because they couldn't put a tag on us and say, 'Yeah, they sound just like Sabbath or Zeppelin.' Sure, we'd go out and buy other heavy records and listen to them because we were interested, but it was always separately; it wasn't like, 'We better go get this one.' You wouldn't let it influence you."

K.K. gets a bit more specific on the origin of the band's sound. "When people set the precedent . . . like, I have to agree with you, Deep Purple — *In Rock* is one of the greatest albums of all time. But growing up in England, there had to have been another 150, 200 bands who were equally as influential, from John Mayall's Bluesbreakers to bands like Cream, Hendrix,



The Who, Rory Gallagher, Free, Blodwyn Pig; you've got Jethro Tull, Chicken Shack, a lot of blues bands, Savoy Brown, Foghat, Fleetwood Mac, great bands like Budgie who are pretty much unknown now, but whatever . . . they did some great stuff. They were all great influences, so if you were going to compete with the likes of Sabbath or whatever, you damn well better come up with something pretty good and unique. Otherwise you're not going to go anywhere. And even if you were good, it was hard to make any headway. So we decided to come up with stuff we thought was top quality, to have quality control over what we put out, and that's stayed with us to this day."

To catch up, Priest at this point were managed by David Corke and MAM. John Hinch was the band's drummer, with, curiously, Tipton providing some synth work as well as backing vocals on their first album. *Rocka Rolla* was recorded late June into July of 1974, and issued September 6th, on Gull Records. The production on the album was in fact handled by Rodger Bain, with Vic Smith mixing. The band has always thought the production wasn't the greatest, with Ian calling it "lame," noting that various remasters and reissues have spruced up the sound a bit. In this writer's opinion, there's very little wrong with the production, other than a touch too much intimacy and twee-ness. Other than that, the bass and the treble and the placement of the instruments are all more than acceptable for 1974 — it really wouldn't be until *Hell Bent for Leather* that the band would get a production where no complaints whatsoever could be leveled against it. Still, the tinkering with *Rocka Rolla* would start as early as 1981, with the exploitative *Hero, Hero* compilation receiving remixing and remastering by original producer Rodger Bain.

Back to 1974, and into the studio (Sparks and Paul Rodgers were also working there), Priest found themselves intimidated to work with the man who produced Black Sabbath. What's more, poverty had them sleeping in the van outside the studio and recording at night when the rates were down. John Hinch complained about being rushed through his parts, and the rest of the band were instantly disappointed with the transfer of their aggressive, loud performances to the relative tepidness of the final product. In fact, K.K. has said that Rodger Bain had fallen asleep on the couch after having worked 36 hours straight. He then had to pop up and put the album straight to vinyl, with most of his faculties still fogged.

"Rob would come up with his ideas on a cassette," explains Hinch, about the songwriting process, "and we would listen to them in the van. Or we would listen to them down at Holy Joe's, the rehearsal room we used to go to. And an attempt would be made to do something with the song. Things would change, of course; words would change, the music in fact would change. The beat would be created to it. So we

HE WOULD JUST GO RAMBLING OFF INTO A COMPLETE VERSE WE HAD NEVER, EVER HEARD BEFORE.

all had a big contribution, to actually construct a song — I wouldn't say 'write' the song — in our own way, including Ian on the bass and myself on drums. We could each totally turn a song, as we felt. We could direct its pace, its force, its whatever. We would then put it into the set, maybe have to drop one of the earlier songs, or shorten them, and then find out what the reaction was. Rob had free license to change the words as and when he felt, even at the gig. I mean, he would just go rambling off into a complete verse we had never, ever heard before. He was very good at ad-libbing. If we liked — or if he liked — what had changed, it would tend to stick. Although Al wasn't with the band, the songs he wrote for Mark I or Mark II Judas Priest are there on the first album, *Rocka Rolla*, and they were good songs — they didn't get dropped because he wasn't with the band. Which is usually the case. If that would have been the situation, Al Atkins would've disappeared into obscurity. From what I can gather, he is still writing songs, and pretty good songs at that. And good luck to you."

"So off we went into the studio," continues Hinch. "And I think we recorded the album over a three-week period. We went to Island Studios, Trident Studios and Olympic Studios. We met the Stones at Olympic Studios, I think it was, and Supertramp in Trident Studios. So yes, we were really excited; we were happening. Rodger, who had been to many rehearsals up in Birmingham to format the songs, was there to guide us. We were totally into Rodger, because Rodger had had a history of successes with bands such as Black Sabbath. So we felt that he was the right guy to produce the album. I wouldn't say that Priest was trying to go down the line of Black Sabbath. The songs were more sensitive, I would say, and a lot quieter in parts. Or put it this way, the set was interspersed with pleasant songs . . . 'Run of the Mill,' 'Dreamer Deceiver,' that sort of thing."

As it would turn out, *Rocka Rolla* opens with "One for the Road," a naff lyric about all of us appreciating music together floating atop a complex but contemplative riff that would have held its own on *Sad Wings of Destiny*, lyrics of this world and not the other, notwithstanding. The chorus possesses its own upper crust integrity on this fitting opener to the recorded canon of the Priest, setting a charted course toward the relentless invention of Priest albums not three years away.

The title track is next, and it's a hard-working, hard-rocking charmer, easily the album's sing-along anthem — lyrically, the song is a colorful, humorous, lighthearted look at a man-eater of a woman. Halford is ever the thespian, shaping his lines (even adding a bit of harmonica — scrubbed off on select future remixes) while K.K. and Glenn give us their first highly tuneful twin lead duel, along with a Celtic melody straight out of early Thin Lizzy.

Then Priest get progressive on us, turning in a four-parter later dubbed the Winter Suite, or less popularly, the Judas Priest opus. This collection of movements would cause no end of distress to CD reissuers who would variously leave the songs as one block, or assign partitions correctly or incorrectly. In any event, the songs proper are "Winter," "Deep Freeze," "Winter Retreat" and "Cheater," with only the latter leaping out as a semi-classic, its gallop positioning this technical rocker as, again, something that could have easily fit the trundling bluster of the band's sophomore album. Comments Al Atkins, credited with some of the songwriting on the album, "I wrote the lyrics to 'Winter' in 1969 on a tour of Scotland, when the first Judas Priest got stuck up a mountain in the snow in the middle of winter. God it was cold, and we were all penniless." "Cheater" doesn't have much to do with Atkins' contemplative reflections on winter's chill of the soul, but nonetheless, it kind of breaks the listener out of its reverie. In essence, the fairly uneventful preceding bits serve as a dramatic introduction to this modern metal classic. Hinch, in fact, grooves forcefully on this one, with Halford providing spirited harmonica work with a jamming blues band vibe. Essentially, the grouping of "Cheater" with the suite is now considered by the band to be an error.

Still, the Winter Suite is an admirable piece of work, with the opening track, "Winter," capturing very much a Sabbath vibe, huge mournful guitars oozing all over simple but effective fills from Hinch. "Deep Freeze" recalls

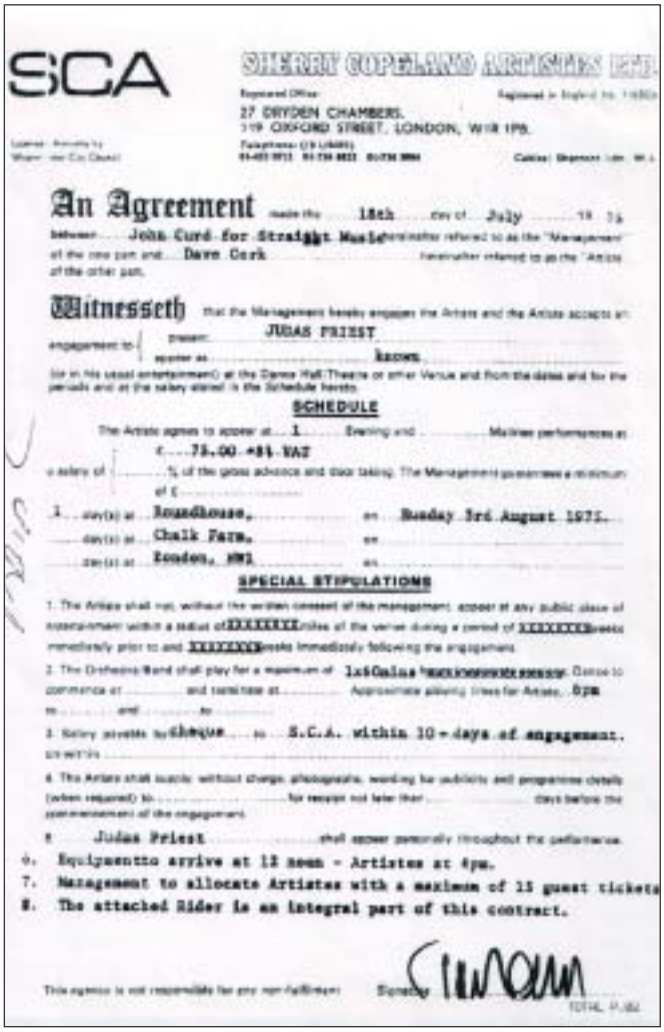
Sabbath's "FX" and precedes Rush's "Didacts and Narpets" by a year. In fact, the whole 9:40 stride of the piece predicts the epic constructs Rush would adopt, with "Winter Retreat" sounding uncannily close melodically to passages from both sides of Rush's *2112*.

On to side two and another leaden interlocutor on par with "Cheater" and "One for the Road" emerges. "Never Satisfied" feels in fact like a cross between the two. It is a track self-sufficient and powerful, yet obtuse and bluesy, laced with intelligent riffs warmly recorded atop full-bodied bass and a square-ish but not unpleasant drum sound. Says Atkins, "I wrote this song about greed and changes in life and will we ever be satisfied at all? K.K. wrote some

extra lyrics at the end — 'There's nowhere left to go / This could be our last show.' I don't know what he meant by that, but he was credited for it, for what it was worth." The bubbly, volcanic, iconic riffing of Glenn and K.K. can be heard in its impressive infancy here, this being a track befitting the brooding, medieval totality of *Sad Wings* with nary a dust-off needed, save perhaps for flashier lyrics. The song's closing sequence features an unwinding slowdown along with deflating Sabbatharian melodic trademarks, punctuated finally with a Halford wail that predicts the much better "Victim of Changes" crescendo to come on the band's next groundbreaking record.

Come "Run of the Mill" Rob finds something to enthuse about after all these years, claiming that the "You can't go on, can't go on" bit is of a range he hasn't been able to hit for heavy metal ages. Still, the track is all but forgotten today, serving to remind us of a much more naïve and in fact, adventurous time in rock 'n' roll history. The song is a dark, despondent ballad with huge Sabbath chords breaking the contemplation before a return to the bluesy stealth of the pre-Rush progressive mid-rock tiptoeing through the verse. Much of the middle of this 8:30 meander is dedicated to deft and jazzy jamming by the guitarists over a classy groove from Hill and Hinch. Toward the end, the song breaks open for an impassioned melodic close with Rob, as mentioned, singing high, but back in the mix.

"Dying to Meet You" is often paired with "Run of the Mill" as a track largely forgotten,



SCA

SHERRY COPELAND AGENCIES LTD.

27 DRYDEN CHAMBERS,
119 OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W1R 1PB.

An Agreement made the 18th day of July 19 71

between John Curd for Straight Music hereinafter referred to as the "Management" of the one part and Dave Cork hereinafter referred to as the "Artiste" of the other part.

Witnesseth that the Management hereby engages the Artiste and the Artiste accepts an engagement to present JUDAS PRIEST appear as known (or in his usual entertainment) at the Dance Hall Theatre or other Venue and from the dates and for the periods and at the salary stated in the Schedule hereto.

SCHEDULE

The Artiste agrees to appear at 1 Evening and Matinee performances at

£ 75.00 +8% VAT

a salary of % of the gross advance and door taking. The Management guarantees a minimum of £

1 day(s) at Roundhouse, on Sunday 3rd August 1971.

day(s) at Chalk Farm, on

day(s) at London, NW1 on

SPECIAL STIPULATIONS

1. The Artiste shall not, without the written consent of the management, appear at any public place of entertainment within a radius of XXXXXXX miles of the venue during a period of XXXXXXX weeks immediately prior to and XXXXXXX weeks immediately following the engagement.

2. The Orchestra/Band shall play for a maximum of 1x45mins with no encores. Dance to commence at and terminate at Approximate playing times for Artiste. 8pm to and to

3. Salary payable by cheque to S.C.A. within 10 days of engagement.

4. The Artiste shall supply without charge photographs, wording for publicity and programme details (when required) to for receipt not later than days before the commencement of the engagement.

5. Judas Priest shall appear personally throughout the performance.

6. Equipmentto arrive at 12 noon - Artistes at 4pm.

7. Management to allocate Artistes with a maximum of 15 guest tickets

8. The attached Rider is an integral part of this contract.

This agency is not responsible for any non-fulfilment Signed

TOTAL P.02

I WAS THE OLDEST MEMBER OF THE BAND, AND IF ANYONE STEPPED OUT OF LINE, I WOULD JUST THREATEN TO BEAT THEM UP.

but also crucial to the psychological effect of *Rocka Rolla* as somewhat uneasy and malevolent, yet progressive and almost esoteric and beyond discernible influence. The track in fact contains the most ambitious lyric of the album, challenged only by the hugely epic "Mother Sun," partially worked up but never recorded proper for this album or any other. Once again, the band shoots directly for a Sabbath vibe on the heavy bits, but then strums electric and stormy yet folky for the softer passages. A pleasant surprise is tucked into the back half of the track. Amusingly, like the Winter Suite on side one, a classy, modern rocker, seemingly self-contained, explodes from nowhere. This time, however, it is simply the second half of "Dying to Meet You" — no extra naming required — with the band rocking like Nazareth or again Thin Lizzy, capturing the metal potential of both the hard rock gallop and certain strains of Celtic.

"'Caviar and Meths' is about two people of the same age growing up into two different directions, one wealthy, one not," says Atkins about the album's closer. However, the track was rendered for the record in instrumental form. One must again bring up Tony Iommi, for this two-minute bit of fluff could very easily have fit

on *Master of Reality* instead of that record's "Orchid" or "Embryo" or even as an intro to "Solitude" — it is dead Sabbatharian in every imaginable way. Atkins' fairly extensive original lyrics were not used, only emerging in 1988 on his *Heavy Thoughts* solo album, and then on his *Victim of Changes* record in 1994. "The record's a documentation of the early years of Priest, '69 to '73," said Al about working up the full-blown "Caviar and Meths," plus others, adding a little reminiscing of his Priest days. "It was strange for me to record songs I wrote over 20 years ago, but people often asked me about that material and I enjoyed doing it. It sounds like a '70s metal album! I don't think the band was aware of how good those songs were. I think I've proven that the early songs can be recorded now and they still sound great."

"Priest were all great rock 'n' roll guys," continues Atkins, "no different than anybody else at the time. I was the oldest member of the band, and if anyone stepped out of line, I would just threaten to beat them up, which I only had to do once. So we all got on very well. They were all pretty good players early on. I know Ian Hill comes from good stock. His dad was a bass player in a jazz band, unfortunately dying young. In '69, the band had none of the members who are there now, but in '70 the lineup solidified, although we went through three drummers from John Ellis and Chris Campbell to Alan Moore, who played on *Sad Wings*. Last I heard from him, he was driving a tour truck around America for the Rolling Stones. Drummers are a breed of their own."

And so Priest — with a certain metal god replacing Al — hit the road in late '74, in support of their proud first baby, notable set inclusion for the band being "Mother Nature's Son," the hardened epic/power ballad from the Atkins era, featuring both Glenn and Rob on

JUDAS PRIEST
K.K. Downing (guitar)
Glenn Tipton (guitar)
Jules Hewitt (drums)
Rob Halford (vocals)
Ian Hill (bass guitar)
Programme designed, produced and published by THEATREGRAPHICS
Telephone: 01-437 2826
If you require further copies of this programme please forward 20p + 5p postage to Dept. JP, Theatregraphics, 231 Oxford Street, 13 Oxford Circus Avenue, W.1.

vocals. Unsurprisingly, the *Rocka Rolla* tour would be little more than a cold and rainy pub crawl around England, the band staying on the road for most of September and October, while logging a couple of dates in November and December. Shockingly, barely a year and a half down the trail, this long-suffering bar band would issue one of the greatest heavy metal albums of all time.

SAD WINGS OF DESTINY

(Gull, March '76)

Side 1

Victim of Changes
The Ripper
Dreamer Deceiver
Deceiver

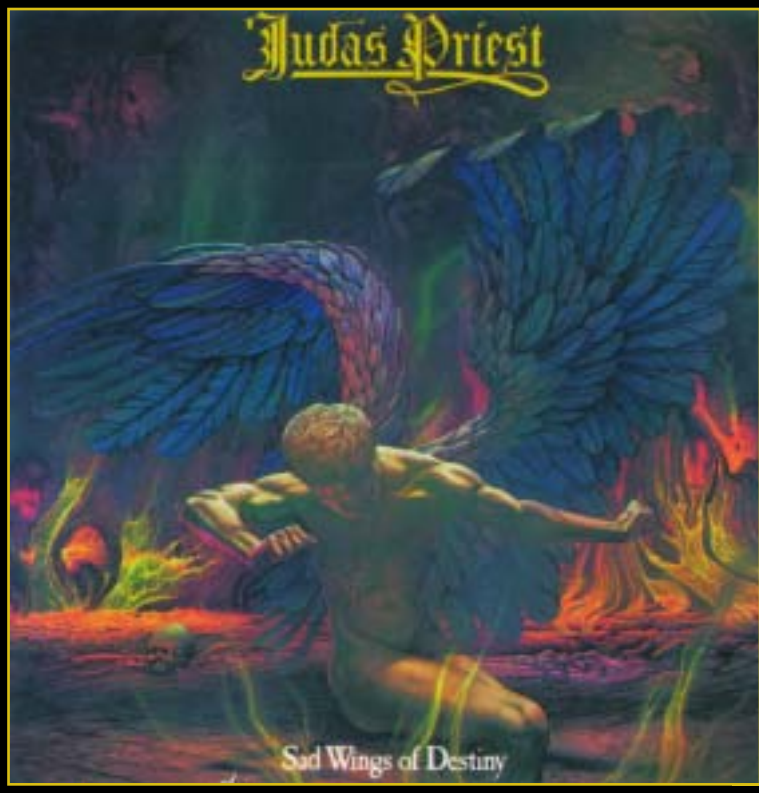
Side 2

Prelude
Tyrant
Genocide
Epitaph
Island of Domination

3

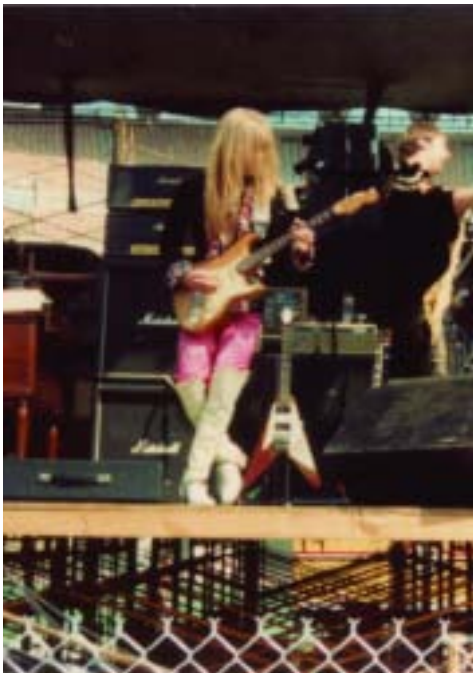
"GOD WILL CRUCIFY YOU! DON'T SEE THIS BAND!"

– Sad Wings of Destiny



Sad Wings of Destiny was an incredible leap forward for the ill-reputed world of heavy metal, quite possibly the first record to make a real creative difference since Deep Purple's *In Rock* six years earlier.

"Rodger Bain did the first one and obviously we didn't use him again," explains Ian Hill. "We went with Max West and Jeffery Calvert. They were riding high at the time on the pop charts in England. They had done a pop song pretending to be Jamaicans. The song was called 'I Want to Go to Barbados' and the band was called Typically Tropical. Everybody thought they were black soul artists, and of course they are not. One is Welsh and the other is a London Jewish guy [laughs]. They were great in the studio and we used them as the production team. The difference is noticeable to say the least."



Sad Wings of Destiny was recorded at the venerable Rockfield Studio in Wales, home of mates Budgie, and then mixed at Morgan, in London. A future production star by the name of Chris Tsangarides was one of the engineers on the session. Simultaneously at Morgan, UFO was working on *No Heavy Petting*, with K.K. also revealing that progster Dave Greenslade had asked him by to play on his album. Sabbath were working close by as well, on what was to be *Technical Ecstasy*.

"I wasn't in awe at them; it was just what they did," says Chris, who began the session as tape operator and rose to engineer through chance. "I'd seen them at gigs and I was really pleased to be working with them. Like I said, there I was working at the studio, and I was really pleased because I loved their sound. Basically they were rather large fans of Queen at the time, and Queen had huge productions at the time and what have you. Of course, we had nowhere near the budget to do what Queen could achieve, nor the type of studio. Nonetheless, that was the goalpost and that's what we tried to do. But it was them, really. It was their vision, I suppose."

Asked about Calvert, credited as producer along with West, Chris explains that "basically, Jeffrey had to leave the session because he became really ill, and that's how I sort of managed to be promoted [laughs] into engineer. And Jeffrey was a pop guy. He had a hit single at the time with that Typically Tropical song, this funny, sort of reggae pop song. It was a massive hit for the company, and so there was a huge budget for him and his partner Max West to produce Judas Priest, because they were on the same label. I mean, they were good technical people. They knew how things should be recorded, but weren't into rock or metal to any stretch of the imagination, so it was a very odd pairing, if you think about it. But whatever they had, whatever input they

might have had collectively, we all managed to somehow piece together what has become a bit of a classic, I suppose."

Most fans and critics, as well as the band themselves, consider this to be the record on which Judas Priest discovered their sound, located their special purpose in life, came into their own. "I think we all did," agrees Hill. "The band became more prolific; it was a learning curve. We were all getting more professional. It shows to a huge degree on the second album. It wasn't just the production, it was the performances themselves too."

WE WERE ALL GETTING MORE PROFESSIONAL. IT SHOWS TO A HUGE DEGREE ON THE SECOND ALBUM. IT WASN'T JUST THE PRODUCTION, IT WAS THE PERFORMANCES THEMSELVES TOO.

The *Sad Wings* album cover depicts in a glorious illustration topped with religious-fonted text, a fallen angel, *Fallen Angel* in fact being the title of the piece. "That was done by a guy named Patrick Woodroffe," says Hill. "It was commissioned for that album. The head of Gull Records actually has the painting on the wall of his office. It is a classic album cover — one of the all-time classics."

Woodroffe (born 1940 in West Yorkshire, England; living in Cornwall since 1964) cut his teeth doing approximately 90 book covers in the '70s. His other notable rock 'n' roll clients include Pallas, in 1983, with covers for Ross, the Strawbs and Greenslade preceding his Priest work, issued in '74, '74 and '75 respectively. Woodroffe's ebullient *Sad Wings* cover would be reinforced and supported by a back cover shot of Rob Halford (they're still trying to get his name right on this one — he's calling himself "Robert") in a sort of Jesus Christ pose. The album's song titles would be rendered in the same substantial gothic font to complete the gravitas of the visual presentation. John Pasche at Gull Graphics was art director on the cover (the facelift of the band's 1972 logo came from him as well), with much of the concept coming from agent Neil French, who understood that the band wanted to present themselves as dramatic. The commissioning of Woodroffe was at the behest of label head David Howells, who, Patrick recalls, was the first person he had ever seen use a mobile phone.

Also on the cover, around the angel's neck, is a symbol adopted by the band, referred to by the guys as "the devil's pitchfork," or more politically correct, "the devil's cross," as if the milder descriptor would discourage sanctimonious detractors.

"We can't pat ourselves on the back and say we knew what we were doing," says Tipton, amused at the accolades heaped upon the band far too many years after the creation of *Sad Wings*. "We just sat down . . . there's a natural formula in the band and it just works, you know? And it just turns classic stuff out. And I

WE USED TO GET PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE GIGS WITH PLACARDS, SAYING, 'GOD WILL CRUCIFY YOU! DON'T SEE THIS BAND! DON'T GO IN!'

don't mean that in an immodest way. Classic Priest . . . let me put it that way: it's the way we write and perform as five individuals. And we're just fortunate that that occurs. Rob obviously dealt with most of the lyrics. I think if you go back through our songs, you'll see that the titles are actually heavier than the lyrical content. It's a different sentiment in there than people think. But you tend to get tarred with the same brush. We used to get people outside the gigs with placards, saying, 'God will crucify you! Don't see this band! Don't go in!' And it's like, well, what have we done? Our lyrics have never been about bad things — it's just a turn of phrase."

"Musically, we've always been very versatile," adds Ian, in response to comments from Rob that he had seen Queen as an inspiration. "We've covered a lot of ground in 25 years. We've done ballads that will make you weep and we've done stuff that would make you crap yourself, and everything in between. So there have been no boundaries from a musical point of view."

A lack of boundaries was important to the band right from the start, but by the time they had finished this monumental second album, they had realized that too many compromises had been made on *Rocka Rolla*, and that the band's influences had been worn too prominently on their sleeves. The guys also gained confidence and piped up more with respect to production differences. Over the years, few complaints from the guys have been leveled at *Sad Wings* on the production front, with Hill

going so far as to say that the sound here, versus that of *Rocka Rolla*, was "a hundred times" better. In this writer's opinion, the sound is marginally better, with both being quite good, if not at the high end of high fidelity for the age — *Dark Side of the Moon* and *Wish You Were Here* had been out, to name a couple, and in the hard rock realm, Aerosmith's *Rocks* is a 1976 album and it sounds fantastic. Still, the band absolutely slags *Rocka Rolla*, with Halford, as far back as 1976, joking about starting a campaign to have fans burn their copy of the album — definitely a career-limiting move when you've only got two albums to your name and no money!

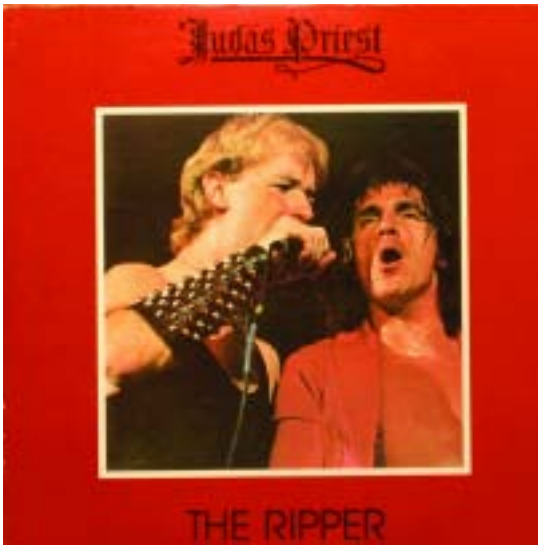
"I think we really had our own sound by then, and we just got on and did it," continues Ian, along the same train of thought. "The first album, we had a tiny budget and the second album we did as well. I mean, we were on the night shift. We would work from dusk 'til dawn because that's where the cheapest hours in the studio were [laughs]. We would sleep outside in the van during the day, and that was the scene that was going on those two albums. But the major difference on the second album is that the production was much, much better. *Rocka Rolla*, the material was fine, there was nothing wrong with that, it was just poorly put down. It was funny because Rodger Bain, he had just come off . . . producing Black Sabbath, and we thought, 'Oh god, we're onto a winner here!' But it just didn't sound good. It just didn't come across at all — no dynamics, nothing. That's another one that is ripe for remastering I suppose, but we don't get along

SUDDENLY YOU'RE NOT CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANYMORE, YOU WANT TO DO YOUR OWN THING, BUT YOU AREN'T FAMOUS ENOUGH TO MAKE A LIVING OUT OF IT.

that well with Gull. Maybe they've done it already; we never get to know. We've washed our hands of each other. They were looking upon us as their meal ticket. I think they were hoping that we were going to make the record company big rather than the other way around. And they did try hard. You can't knock the effort that they did put in, but they just didn't have the financial clout to make it happen. When you have to record overnight [laughs] . . . I mean, you're young and you just do it because you want your album up there on the shelf. But I think when you think back with what you put up with, I don't think people would do it today [laughs]."

"I don't believe there are any musicians who weren't playing other people's stuff when they were just starting out," said Glenn Tipton just after the release of *Sad Wings*. "On one hand, you need lots of exercise, I mean both musical and onstage, and on the other hand you also have to make a living. That, at that time, was nothing but reproducing and if you can do both of them well enough, to a certain extent, you can both accumulate touring experience and work on your abilities. This drags on for a while until you suddenly realize, 'Now I've

PEOPLE MAY LIKE US OR NOT — IT DOESN'T MATTER TO US ANYMORE!



made it far enough to be able to purely express what I want and think.' I mean, that's also the actual turning point in the life of a rock musician. Suddenly you're not content with what you're doing anymore, you want to do your own thing, but you aren't famous enough to make a living out of it. Even with our LPs you can see the exact same problem. Our first LP, *Rocka Rolla*, still shows our indecision very clearly. But the results, not very well seen according to sales, were positive, and gave us the strength and will to do it exactly the way we want it now, on our second LP. This is our own individual music, it carries our stamp, and there are no more compromises. People may like us or not — it doesn't matter to us anymore!"

Sad Wings of Destiny, issued March 23, 1976, opens eerily with mysterious, classical-shackled twin leads that soon crash into a torrent of malevolent power chords. What emerges is an instant Priest classic. "'Victim of Changes' started life as 'Whiskey Woman,'" explains Ian. "It was written by Ken and Alan Atkins originally, the original vocalist for the band, who left. It was sort of put on the backburner for the first album and it ended up being put on *Sad Wings* in a very, very revamped way. Robert put some new lyrics to it, and Glenn got involved and worked closely with Ken and changed the rhythm and the format of the song. And that one is evergreen; that is a song we could not drop [laughs]. It's one of those songs that we would get lynched if we dropped it. It's one of the all-time classic songs. It's got everything — the rock, the melody — it's got two great lead breaks. It's what Priest were and are known for really, the light and shade, the heaviness, the aggression, and it's all summed up in that one song, really."

Adds Atkins, "'Whiskey Woman' was about another down-and-out alcoholic who lost her man to another woman because of her drinking habit. I got the idea for the music when listening to Led Zep's 'Black Dog' song, with Robert Plant singing a passage on his own without music, and then a big riff coming in. Rob Halford then put one of his slow songs on the end called 'Red Light Lady' and the band retitled it 'Victim of Changes.' What a track! As I've often said, I was the main writer in the band in the beginning, but things get kicked around over the years and lyrics are added, but as long as everyone's happy with the outcome, that's all that matters."

"Victim of Changes" indeed contains every-

thing Hill alludes to. Priest is still somewhat Sabbath-steeped in their menacing riff-writing, but with the shifts in mood, the "Black Dog" stop/start structure, and the addition of Rob's "song" to the back section (actually a vestige from his pre-Priest band, Hiroshima), this is an involved stormer of a track.

"'Victim of Changes' was the first song I ever heard by Priest and it blew me off my socks," says Sully from Godsmack, who in 2006 would steal the VH1 Rock Honors show with a scorching medley of Priest classics. "It was amazing. It was just so heavy and powerful and . . . fuck man, I was a huge Priest fan after that. I always thought they had just a little bit more edge than Maiden did and were a little tougher sounding — kick-ass, great band. I was more into Priest than I was Maiden. I went and saw Priest a number of times and it was a great show. Those two are like McDonald's and Burger King, you know?"

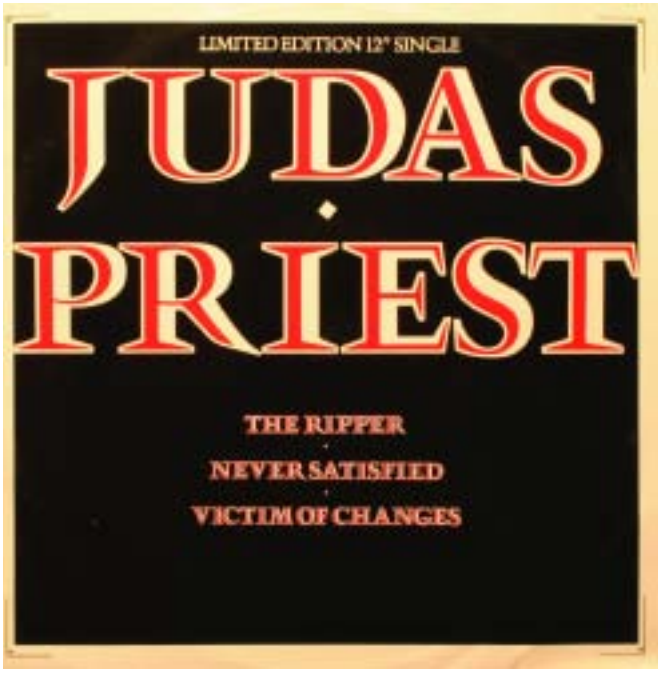
Added Sully on the Rock Honors concert, "We did it because it's nice to pay homage to our mentors. We didn't even know we could do it. That's not the kind of vocalist I am; I don't have that kind of range. So I had to bob and weave around all the high notes. But we got to meet the guys, and they were just so thrilled that we were doing it, and they were very complimentary to us and it was very surreal — to be around them and hear them talk about us."

"*Sad Wings* was probably the most influential," adds Tommy Victor of Prong and Ministry fame, "but I didn't get into them on that record. I missed that; I was too young. When *Sin After Sin* came out, and then *Stained Class* . . . that's totally one of my favorite records. That's why we got Dodson to do the first two Prong major label releases, because he worked with them. That to me was enough for any credentials."

IT'S WHAT PRIEST WERE AND ARE KNOWN FOR REALLY, THE LIGHT AND SHADE, THE HEAVINESS, THE AGGRESSION, AND IT'S ALL SUMMED UP IN THAT ONE SONG, REALLY.

"The earlier song, 'Whiskey Woman,' we'd been playing from day one," recalls Hinch. "I mean, that was the demo that they'd heard, and several other companies. 'Whiskey Woman' and 'Run of the Mill.' And 'Whiskey Woman' is a powerful, powerful song. I've still got the demos, very strong. But it wasn't recorded on the *Rocka Rolla* album; it was sort of held back. It was, of course, changed and joined onto 'Victim of Changes.' Because it was the first number of the set, it was the key song to our whole being, almost, with the dual guitars. Ken and Glenn would start off [sings it], and then it would come in really, really powerful and off we would go. It would always go down; a really good opener for us."

Next up on *Sad Wings* is "The Ripper," which opens Queen-like in the extreme, fantastic with the vocal acrobatics, the twin lead, the machine gun riffing. Once the song progresses, the band settles into a grinding groove, punctuated by fastback bits laced with elegant twin leads of a classical nature. Returned drummer Alan Moore is a big part of this



song's thrust and parry, Moore coming back to the band in October of '75 after a spell away with Sundance, with which he managed to record an album.

Comments Tipton on the drummer muddle, "Well, John . . . when I joined the band, John was the first drummer in the band, and I think both John and Alan Moore, really, had bad luck in this instance. We got management interested in the band, or record companies, and they got voted out. And I think, particularly in Alan Moore's case [between *Sad Wings* and its follow-up, *Sin After Sin*], it was unfair, but we had no choice at the time. If we were going to get signed, we had to get a new drummer or we weren't going to get signed. And we were living, really, in the face of poverty at the time, where we couldn't even really afford petrol to go in the van. And some of these decisions are made for you, and it's unfair on individuals, but that's life. It could've been me, it could have been anyone. You're forced to go with it. With John, there were some personality problems. He didn't really see eye-to-eye with certain people in the band; I'm not going to say who. So it stemmed from that, unfortunately. But I'm not criticizing anybody, you understand."

For his part, Hinch claims he left the band after he had his thumb bitten in a bar fight between he and Glenn on one side, and a number of the patrons on the other. K.K. had claimed they only kept Hinch around because he had a van, and Glenn was known to disparage Hinch's drumming skills. Hinch went on to a career in artist management, dealing with the likes of Uli Jon Roth, Uli's brother Zeno Roth, and NWOBHM upstarts Jameson Raid.

Of note, Tipton collars "The Ripper" when asked about Priest tracks he is most proud of, among those in which he had a bigger than usual hand in creating. "It's a very Priest-like song, that I put pen to paper with. Yes, I would declare that one. Which is a bit odd though, because I never got any royalties for that, because Gull Records owns it [laughs]."

But it is rare that Glenn will cop to being chief songsmith on anything. "It's very difficult to say. I mean, I wouldn't ever state and claim the responsibility for a Priest classic, because even if it's only a small part of the song that you have, that you contribute, the magic is in myself and K.K. and Rob getting together. And that can spark up a simple idea and make it into a great song. So I would never claim any of the magic for any particular song, because everybody contributes. And when we walk into a room, we never know quite the way it's going to go. It's that magic formula, really, that spark, the energy working off each other, the room suddenly lighting up, that makes Priest hit as a songwriting team."

Tipton's "The Ripper" was launched as a single, backed with "Island of Domination," in March of '76, simultaneous with the release of the full album. Much happens within the track's short timeframe, its Queen-like surges making for a smart, event-rich track that indeed captures the sense and sensibility of the Victorian era in which the actual Jack the Ripper performed his heinous deeds.

Moving on, "'Deceiver' is the title part to 'Dreamer Deceiver,'" says Hill of the two-fer that comprises the second half of the album's first side. "'Dreamer' is a ballad, and the latter part of it, where Ken does a lead guitar solo, is very much up-tempo. So we just called it 'Deceiver.' I just got on my bass parts and music bits, and the lyrics were by Rob."

"Dreamer Deceiver" features Rob singing mostly in a low croon, with a few high bits as a sort of break. Backward cymbal swishes recall Sabbath, while a bit of acoustic soloing spruces up the track. Again, the band's Queen influence can be heard in Rob's singing at the intro, as well as in the fact that when Priest played lightly, there was almost always a renaissance or medieval tone to the affair. "This is not one of mine," clarifies Atkins. "I think there was a riff of mine in there somewhere which I am credited to, again, for what it's worth. I love this song though, and have just recorded it on my new album." On the original LP, all of side one is credited to Downing/Halford/Tipton/Atkins, save for "The Ripper," which gets a Tipton credit exclusively. On subsequent reissues, Atkins' credit is dropped from "Dreamer Deceiver" and "Deceiver."

"Deceiver" might be considered the band's first recorded instance of truly modern technical proto-speed metal. Sure, the tempo is only brisk perhaps, but there's an insistent, no-compromise chug to the riff, as well as a

IT'S THAT MAGIC FORMULA, REALLY, THAT SPARK, THE ENERGY WORKING OFF EACH OTHER, THE ROOM SUDDENLY LIGHTING UP, THAT MAKES PRIEST HIT AS A SONGWRITING TEAM.

gorgeous, recurring coda to it. The soloing is also wild, as is the hugely heavy and sinister break, o'er which Rob hits a pile of super high notes. The track ends with a shudder and a lurch, after which Iommi-like acoustic wake music sends the song off on a boat down the river.

Drummer Hinch knows quality when he hears it. "I could always get very emotionally involved with 'Dreamer Deceiver.' Glenn did what I consider to be this phenomenal lead break. I used to love that song. I mean, some nights it would choke me up. It was that good."

"Halford wrote songs for Halford," continues Hinch. "He believed in the songs that he wrote. As can be seen on the first two albums, those songs, by and large, are quite meaningful if you listen to the words. And you know, they do come from a sensitive person. Is this the difference between a star and just another performer? Despite his screaming, wailing voice, he had a powerful voice and he did have a presence onstage — he had star quality; that is undoubtable. He could write songs, and he had this ability to ad-lib in the song and just come out with words that actually did make sense. I mean, from the soul, from the heart."

Of note, in April of 1975, nearly a year before the release of *Sad Wings*, Priest had gotten themselves on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, playing "Rocka Rolla" and the then-unreleased "Dreamer Deceiver"/"Deceiver" package. This appearance featured John Hinch still as the drummer for the band, as well as a battle with the producers over how loud the band was allowed to go. Tipton can be heard prominently, if not all that accurately, on backup vocals; K.K. is wearing his big floppy white hat and an exploded abomination of a shirt; Rob looks thin and frail in a pink satin top and long, blond hair as he looks the camera straight in the eye and makes heavy metal history (more history would be in the offing as the band got themselves a slot at the Reading Festival four months later).

"Oh, it's got to be the early *Old Grey Whistle Test* things from the '70s," laughs Ian, asked to name the funniest of the band's video experiences over the years. "The dress alone is hysterical. We went through many, shall we say, contemporary images [laughs]. The leather and studs really came about *British Steel* time, about 1980. Before then, it was a whole catalog of different looks and styles, satins . . . it was cool at the time, believe me. I know it doesn't look like it, but it was cool at the time, high-heeled boots and all the rest of it. We were individuals. There wasn't any real coherent plan. We didn't sit down and say, 'This is the image we have to portray.' We just got on with our own images. It wasn't until the leather came along, when it sort of fit perfectly with what we were trying to do. The leather and studs and heavy metal were really made for one another. But we were shocked when we saw the earlier tapes recently again, what people were wearing. But it was fine for the time; it didn't look out of place. It obviously looks dated now, but at the time it was very contemporary [laughs]."

"*Top of the Pops*, everyone used to mime on there," answers Ian, asked to distinguish between the two venerable British music shows. "Basically because there were so many acts on it, it would have been logistically impossible to have everyone playing live. You'd spend a week trying to record it. But *Old Grey Whistle Test* was live. You would set up in the afternoon, do soundchecks. And I think there were only a couple of bands on. It wasn't too much of a nightmare getting in there with changeovers. But for *Top of the Pops* and miming, there are pads put on the drums and you use plastic cymbals. And then there was a playback, not too loud. We were never really good at miming, I must admit. We were a live band and we hated doing it. It was against our philosophy."

In a situation reminiscent of *Rocka Rolla*'s confused partitioning, some copies of *Sad Wings*' second side start right in with "Tyrant," while others sport a two minute baroque-ish instrumental piece called "Prelude" — inconsequential and, frankly, illogical as an introduction, given that "Tyrant" starts simply with a riff, one unrelated in any way to what came before.

"Like 'Victim of Changes,' 'Tyrant,' again, is a very inventive and intense song," muses Hill. "It's a clever song with a lot of parts to it, a very involving track with different breaks and different tempos in it." "Tyrant" indeed is the album's second full-bodied epic, twin leads lacing the song with importance, Halford spitting out the song's timeless message with military precision, the whole thing feeling hugely important — again, medieval, given the biblical meter of the lyric phrasing. Says Rob, "I love 'Tyrant' simply because of its class and style and approach in its lyrics. It's an area that I want to re-explore actually. It just talks about the fact that in the world there are these tyrannical fig-

I USED TO LOVE THAT SONG. I MEAN, SOME NIGHTS IT WOULD CHOKE ME UP. IT WAS THAT GOOD.

ures in life that control and terrorize people. It's a combination of fantasy and reality, but I love the musical composition because it's a real roller coaster. There are twists and turns, and a lot of information and a a lot of musical directions happening within that one moment."

"I wouldn't say that there's no fantasy at all in our lyrics," said Rob, on the press trail for the record in the fall of 1976. "Our lyrics are firmly bound to the present, but there's still a certain freedom in their organization which enables the listeners to include their own fan-

WE WERE A LIVE BAND AND WE HATED DOING IT. IT WAS AGAINST OUR PHILOSOPHY.

tasy, their own experience, their environment. For example, I wrote a song with the title 'Tyrant.' In this piece, I expressed my aversion towards any form of control, that is very concrete, but still the lyrics are chosen in such a way that the listener is able to find his own frustrations of this problem interpreted within this framework."

Continues Rob, in the same interview, "Generally speaking, we don't care what we do to people, I mean, which motivations we release in them. We come onstage to play high energy rock, and if people like it, then I don't give a shit what they do afterwards. Whether they go and buy guitars, or knock each other's heads in on the way home, or whatever it is that they do. We've done our music, with all the power and energy we have, and that's it! We also don't give a shit whether we become rich and famous through our music. Obviously, you need money in order to survive, but we'll never change our music [just] because we could earn this or that much more money. What we write, and what we play, is genuine and authentic, and it pleases us to play rock music."

"Whether we can succeed or not depends on so many factors which don't have anything to do with music at all," explained Rob. "But we try, and if it works — good; if not, then at least I can say to myself that I've tried. But I'm confident that we'll make it! Why do I believe that we'll make it? It's very simple to explain. As long as there are cities like Birmingham, cities without room for an idyll, as long as the children of these cities have to grow up between those large buildings and dirty roads, without any place for real development, it also gives birth to frustrations, which rock — or, in former times, rock 'n' roll — lets out into the open, and represents their discharge. We grew up in Birmingham, and our childhood wasn't any different from that, same as any childhood in any other industrial city with an insane population density. And the music we make today is nothing but the expression of these feelings and frustrations. It's like that in any form of personal self-manifestation; whether you're a painter, a musician or a writer, your whole background obviously shines through. It's obvious that the imprinting you get from your family, your friends, your whole environment, gets a focus in your work. It's an interpretation of what you are — aggressive, gentle, sentimental or whatever. I can explain very well who we are. Most importantly, we're not a band like Kiss. We put on a good show, but our music comes first. When we're onstage we physically express who we are. With bands such as Kiss the music is secondary, the show is more important for them: I don't want that — that would be bad. When we're onstage, everything we do is genuine; nothing is rehearsed, apart from the music. The physical tension which comes from standing up there and

doing something that the people want and feel, is so big that it makes everything else disappear. You're standing there upon the stage and the audience is staring at you; no matter if it's 50 or 10,000 people, the energy, the tension, which is released in us is just uncontrollable."

Ian demurs at any Sabbath comparisons leveled at the band (even if outsiders might see Sabbath as the main source of the Priest sound, if one must be offered), "I don't think so, no. Although I personally admired Sabbath very highly, I don't think I own one of their albums, to be honest. I was more into the progressive side of things like Cream."

"I don't think so, not really," says Ian, pressed on whether there was a sense of competition between Priest and Sabbath. "They had already made their mark. We just missed that boat. They were the first wave of metal bands and we came on just afterwards. There was never any rivalry. We didn't want to sound like them and they didn't want to sound like us. We didn't want to sound like anybody else. We just wanted to get on with our own thing and do it the best we could."

If you ever wondered why Ian, who does play guitar and composes, hasn't wound up writing for Priest, he explains, "I do write, but not really. I have some ideas that, from time to time, I stick down on tape. Who knows? One day I should be doing a solo album, I would imagine, when I get a little time on my hands. There's no reason why not. And singing, no [laughs]. It's one of those things. I can stand up there and play bass to thousands and thousands of people but you put me in front of a microphone and I freeze. I'm just one of those people that can't put myself across. Like weddings and things like that, a best man doing a speech, I'm petrified. But I'll stand up there and do a rendition of one of the bass lines if they like, no problem [laughs]."

"Tyrant" might be considered the band's sequentially second composition of a sort of metal modernity, with follow-up "Genocide" most definitely fitting the bill as well, Priest hitting its stride with a succession of smart, slashing riffs. What's more, the song coughs up the title to the next album, Rob speaking, like Moses on the mount, the words "sin after sin." Of note, Halford to this point has turned in a barnstormer of a vocal performance, through six tracks establishing himself as a new form of vocal technician, the prototype for countless power metal practitioners in the years to come.

Comments Halford, "Once again, 'Genocide' carries for me the same types of feeling as

WE ALSO DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHETHER WE BECOME RICH AND FAMOUS THROUGH OUR MUSIC.

'Tyrant' in that the language is quite strong and graphic, and I'd like to feel that some of the things that I've done with my lyrics is to be provocative and somewhat controversial and to stimulate people. When they're listening to these things, I want them to see what I'm trying to express. I leave the listener up to their own choice of what they wish to do with them. That's one of the great things I love about the power of music, that you can either take it in and enjoy it, or take it to a deeper level. But again, 'Genocide' has a very strong story to tell. Some of the great unfortunate moments in history have come from genocidal situations. But again, it's great, too, because of the complexity of the song and the journey that it takes you on."

It seems that this sort of lyrical philosophy was firmly in mind as a bit of an overarching concept when the album was being put together. Glenn and Rob both spoke at the time about how kids should get out and have themselves a good time, but also realize that the world is about to go through some catastrophic changes. Both Tipton and Halford also seemed proud of the fact that they applied a liberal dose of contrast to the album, with "Epitaph" and "Dreamer Deceiver" there to represent a terrifically quiet and delicate side of the band. Case in point, second-to-last track "Epitaph" is another nod at Queen, with Halford singing in an odd sort of voice to solo piano, plush Queen-like harmonies present for added class. It's a touching track, a reverie on the ravages of age, and a nice foil to the mayhem around it.

Said Rob with respect to "Epitaph," back in 1976, "As there are no places for children in our modern cities, there's also no place for the old. And it's simply frustrating for me to see how these old human beings are forced to live their lives. From these feelings developed the song 'Epitaph.' Besides, the lyrics and texts still have strong importance for me. The words have to mean something for me; they have to help me articulate my feelings. Just like Glenn can make you happy or sad with his guitar playing, it has to be exactly the same with the lyrics. The sound must express what is stated in their logical content."

And a choice bit of mayhem closes the album, the band turning in yet another front-edge metal classic with a riff that presents note densities raised beyond those of Priest's competitors. Jokes K.K., "I think that there are probably a few innuendoes in 'Island of Domination,' obviously with Rob's lyrics and stuff. Probably better to speak to him about that song [laughs]."

Adds Ian, "'Island of Domination' started a bit differently, went through a couple of changes. 'Epitaph' . . . just piano and kettle drums [laughs]. But *Sad Wings* as a whole was comparatively easy, being that the majority of the songs were already written. In latter days, we tended to write in the studio, which tended

to extend the recording period. But in the early days, we couldn't afford to do that [laughs]. Up-and-coming band, we had to get in there and do things as quickly as possible. So in that way, it was quite easy, and the production wasn't as elaborate as future albums. The songs were quite new, except for 'Victim of Changes' of course."

Sad Wings of Destiny crept to a #48 position in the U.K., eventually going gold in 1989. Astonishingly, the esteemed but usually anti-metal *Rolling Stone* ran a review of the album, with Kris Nicholson calling the record, "chock-full of ear-piercing vocals and the thick, sensuous rhythms of a Fender Stratocaster," adding that the album "recalls the intensity of the Deep Purple of *Machine Head*." The short review closes with "Judas Priest have a fair chance of success through copying Deep Purple, especially since their antecedents are no longer contenders for the throne."

Back in reality, the band hit the road broke, but with a hell of a record on its hands. Recording had been conducted under the harshest of circumstances, the boys allowing themselves one meal a day, and eventually getting jobs to support themselves after Gull wouldn't cough up anything for the band to live on. Glenn became a gardener, K.K. worked (and mostly shirked) in a factory and Ian drove a delivery van.

Before the album actually dropped, in early '75, sporadic touring had taken place, Priest supported by the likes of Tuesday, Sounds, and Ray Phillips' new band, Phillips being Budgie's

I CAN EXPLAIN VERY WELL WHO WE ARE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE'RE NOT A BAND LIKE KISS.

ex-drummer. A trip to the U.S. supported by Motown/Tamla, which was attempting to get into white rock 'n' roll (when, in fact, Priest's album was to be issued by Janus Records in both the U.S. and Canada), fell through, with summer being filled in by a jaunt around England, at one point as the undercard to Stray and Babe Ruth. October saw the return of Alan Moore as the band plowed on, sharing stages with Pink Fairies; Reds, Whites & Blues; and Consortium, with a memorable gig logged on December 28th at the Roundhouse with Stray and UFO co-headlining, with Priest and Strife as support.

After the release of *Sad Wings of Destiny*, a headlining tour began in April of 1976, running through May, with a single Roundhouse show in June supported by Isotope and Alcatraz. And that would be it for the band's modest, limited, anticlimactic but character-building *Sad Wings of Destiny* tour. That would also be it for the band's relationship with Gull Records, and good riddance, as far as the guys were concerned. . . .

SIN AFTER SIN

(CBS, April '77)

Side 1

Sinner
Diamonds and Rust
Starbreaker
Last Rose of Summer

Side 2

Let Us Prey
Call for the Priest/Raw Deal
Here Come the Tears
Dissident Aggressor

4

"COME ON LADS, LET'S GO HAVE A DRINK"

– Sin After Sin

Still, applause to CBS for noticing that talent will out, or should out. And so they threw Priest a bone, giving this ambitious band a major label contract, removing the boys from the skinflint machinations of the guys at Gull. Crucial to this turn of events was the fact the boys had canned their previous management, signing on with David Hemmings of Arnakata Management, who engineered the move away from Gull, essentially a breaking of their contract which resulted in the band losing all rights to that material and any demos that might be found scraping about. It was in fact a Brit transplanted to America, Paul Atkinson, then 30 years old and in A&R in the States, who would sign the band to CBS, the label shelling out a 60,000 pound advance with which to forge the band's new collection of pliable, space age, heavy metal anthems. In contrast, Gull's budget for the band's first two albums was 2000 pounds apiece.

BUT WE REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO DO, I DON'T THINK, MUSICALLY, TO TRY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS. IT WAS A DARK PERIOD IN THE BAND'S CAREER.

"Well, again, those were kind of hard times," says K.K., remembering all too clearly that there still wouldn't be much dosh for years to come. "We were going between record companies. Lots of things were happening, changing producers, changing studios. We were still struggling to get the band's sound onto record, onto vinyl, so to speak. Obviously it's much easier now with today's technology. But we were still struggling to do that. And changing drummers, I might add as well. But we were doing well. We were still trying to find our feet, really, with those early recordings. A little bit of frustration that we couldn't get the sound of the energy and the strength of the band on record. Obviously, being able to remaster those recently, it's helped us satisfy ourselves a little bit."

Asked whether the band was going through a big "rethink," K.K. says, "I guess we probably did, because we were a bit disappointed. The *Sad Wings of Destiny* album was a very successful album for the band, you know, and we felt very let down and disappointed in the record industry, because Gull Records really weren't doing what they should do for the band. They were kinda milking us a little bit. So obviously we moved to what was then CBS, which was great. But we really didn't know what we were supposed to do, I don't think, musically, to try to achieve success. It was a dark period in the band's career is what I think. And I think it shows with the songs on that album — if you listen to it, it's really very dark [laughs] and quite moody. And I think the title fits — *Sin After Sin*."

It was a bigger rethink than first impressions would warrant. In fact, the band aborted their first sessions, leading the label to call on Deep Purple bassist and up-and-coming producer Roger Glover to bail out the production. "We had started the album ourselves, and the record company didn't think it

Jill Furmanovsky

was a good idea," recalls Glenn. "Actually we started with another guy, Jeremy somebody. And in those days, we had to listen to the record company, so they suggested Roger. But we didn't mind that suggestion because Roger had always been involved with production, and had been with Deep Purple. It was the first album we did with CBS as well, so they had a lot of influence on us at the time. You know, I think when you look back on anything, you can be critical about it. At the time we were happy with it."

"As far as I was concerned, it was a career move," muses Glover, on tapping the Priest job. "The band wants me to produce them, so I went, 'OK.' They weren't that well-known but they were well-known enough. They had two albums out before that, and it was actually the record company that approached me, 'We want you to produce Judas Priest,' and I said fine and I went along to a rehearsal. It was at Pinewood Studio in London and I went along and said hi, introduced myself. It's very odd meeting five people for the first time. You don't know who's who and who's what. Anyway, they set up and I said, 'Play me some of your stuff.' And they played various songs that they were writing and I'd make various suggestions or noises of encouragement — 'That riff sounds good, but you should put it after the punch line,' that sort of thing. And I got the feeling that they weren't really interested in what I had to say. And it was kind of a strange atmosphere. So at the end of the day I said, 'Come on lads, let's go have a drink.' So we went down to the pub, and I laid my cards on the table and I said, 'Look, I get the feeling that you don't want me to produce you.' And they said, 'Well actually, we're glad you brought that up because that's the truth. We don't want you to produce us.' And I said fine. And they said, 'It's the record company. They want you and we don't want anybody. We want

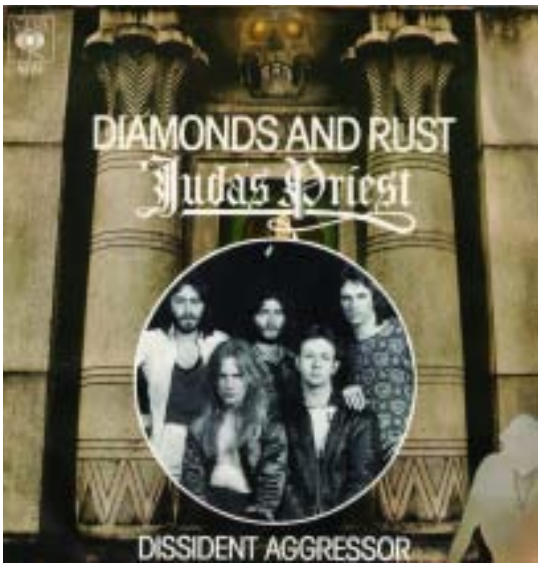
I THINK WHEN YOU LOOK BACK ON ANYTHING, YOU CAN BE CRITICAL ABOUT IT. AT THE TIME WE WERE HAPPY WITH IT.

to do it ourselves.' So I said, 'Look, I don't really want to produce anybody who doesn't want to be produced, so let's just call it a day.' And they were like fine, OK. And that was the end of it; we parted on good terms.

"And I called up management and said, 'It's not going to work out; they're not interested in having me as a producer.' And that's all there was until a month or two later when they were actually in the studio and I got a call begging for help basically. They'd been in the studio for like two weeks, and in the process they had sacked the drummer and they had six studio days left. So I got in the car and went down to the studio and said, 'Well, play me what you've got.' And they played me what they had and it was awful. There was nothing really worth salvaging. And I said, 'Right, what do you want to do?' And they said, 'Well we have six days and we're going to get Simon Phillips,' who I happened to know anyway, and I said, 'Right, well we're going to start from scratch, and we're going to do it really quick,' and boom, we did. So we recorded everything again. But it was done really, really quickly and listening to it now, there are things I would change in an instant, but then again, I think that about most of the albums I've been involved in.

"I think they really found their genre after that. What metal is to me is a kind of . . . if you take a hard rock band, any hard rock band, doesn't have to be us, but something that came out of the '60s, when you had an eclectic mix of musicians with all sorts of musical influences, and you take the extremes of that, and just the extremes, and double the volume, and simplify it all — that's what heavy metal is. It's the extreme end of the screaming part and the loud part and the riff part, and it doesn't take into consideration the jazz, funk, the pop, the folk, the classical. It's one-dimensional music. And sometimes you get strength by being that simple, and Judas Priest were that kind of a band. They're obviously good musicians, but good musicians do not great albums make. Great writers make great albums. And they were finding their feet. They found their feet and they became heavy metal with the whips and chains, which eventually overtook them. No question, Judas Priest were a precursor of the heavy metal thing.

"You know, I got the job on the basis of Nazareth's 'This Flight Tonight,' which was basically my arrangement. Nazareth had run out of songs. They were going to do 'This Flight Tonight,' but they were going to do it the way . . . I don't know, Rod Stewart might have done it on a solo album. And I said, 'No, that's kind of boring, let's do something different.' So I came up with this whole chugga concept and the arrangement for it. And it was on the strength of that, I think, that Judas Priest wanted me to do 'Diamonds and Rust,' which, you know, if you listen to it, you see the similarities. So I can't remember particularly what suggestions I had."



Ian simplifies but basically corroborates Roger's version of events. "It was the first album we did for Columbia, and the budget was bigger for one thing [laughs], so we could spend more time. We also had Roger, of course. Everything seemed to run quite smoothly. It was a bit strange working with Roger at first, but once we got to know him and vice versa, things seemed to go along — easygoing guy, smashing bloke, really. It was also the first album that we ever used a session drummer on. Alan Moore left us for one reason or another, and sort of left us in the lurch — we had an album to record and there was no one to help us put it down [laughs]."

"Roger's a great guy," agrees Tipton, "and when we were working with him, he was very tired a lot of the time. He was going through a divorce, one or two things. But he's a legend, and Purple was one of the first bands I supported, as a guitarist and singer in a three-piece, throughout Europe, and I still get hot flushes when I think about it. That was my real baptism of fire. But I've got a lot of respect for Roger, and

THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY GOOD MUSICIANS, BUT GOOD MUSICIANS DO NOT GREAT ALBUMS MAKE. GREAT WRITERS MAKE GREAT ALBUMS.

Purple were always one of my favorite bands in the early days. So we've got a lot of respect for him; he was a good guy to work with."

The drummer sparking and flying all over what was to become *Sin After Sin* was a young, curly haired prodigy by the name of Simon Phillips, who would go on to all sorts of high profile gigs after Priest, most notably The Who and Pete Townshend solo. "When Simon Phillips came along and started to play, it was amazing," recalls Ian. "He was only 20 or something, only a kid and only a small bloke anyway, but he was absolute dynamite. He got behind this enormous drum kit, and you can hardly see the bloke, and you're giving hand signals to him and everything and he started to play and he blew us away. And of course that set a precedent then. We had to go find somebody who could replace him [laughs]. Unfortunately Simon couldn't join the band; he had committed himself to Jack Bruce. No, I got along great with Simon. We wanted him to join the band, but as I said, he had previous commitments so he couldn't even do the tour. So we had to search high and low to find someone as good as Simon. And of course, Les Binks came along, and he was in excellent standing."

Glenn concurs on the subject of Simon. "Simon is fantastic. At the time, we were

Simon Phillips

between drummers and we needed somebody to play on an album. I mean, he's magical; really you just can't fall out of time with him; he's so solid and capable of so much. And of course Les came in and filled Simon's shoes, which were big shoes to fill. And Les did it admirably, but Simon is magical. And at the time, we did ask him if he wanted to come out and tour, but he had other commitments, so we just had to leave it at that."

"It was in the days when making music and recording music was really fun," recalls Phillips on his brief collaboration with the band. "There were no machines, no metronomes, no ProTools; there were 24 tracks, but there weren't 24 tracks, if you know what I mean. No digital reverb, and you all just sat in a room together and you played. Roger Glover was producing it, and it was really down to him that he asked me to do it, because I played on his solo album *Elements*, which also had Cozy Powell on it, and also on the original Whitesnake album. And we went to a rehearsal room for one day, and we started playing. There wasn't listening to any demos, because there weren't demos. Glenn just had all the songs in his head, and we went through them. And in those days, not everybody had demos. With Pete Townshend, he had a finished record and used to play that to the band [laughs]. Yes, he made incredible demos. But with Priest, I would play along, and when there was a riff to learn, we would stop, he'd show me the riff a couple of times and we would carry on. And that's how we moved it along.

"We moved into Ramport Studios, and Glenn's guitar rig was loud, and the whole drum kit was resonating because of it, and the bass player was next to me as well — same setup as the one I had with Gary Moore doing

Simon Phillips

I WAS PRETTY — AS PETE TOWNSHEND USED TO CALL ME — 'ANARCHIC.'

Back in the Streets . . . fantastic. They had all their stage gear, and Rob Halford was in a booth, actually, the vocal booth where Roger Daltrey used to sing all those songs. And that's how we made the record. Very straightforward, simple and fun; it was great.

"They did ask me to join the band, but I had actually joined a band with Jack Bruce, and we had just made a record for RSO Records, and I was actually a member of the band, so I couldn't really split after making the record [laughs], you know what I mean? So that was the reason I didn't join them. And it's funny, because I bumped into the tall guy who plays with them now, Scott Travis. I bumped into Scott in S.I.R. in Los Angeles years ago. They were rehearsing next door and I was rehearsing with Joe Walsh and Keith Emerson and John Entwistle [laughs]; we were putting a project together. It was funny, because I hadn't seen any of those guys since 1977. And here we are 1990; it was amazing, not actually running into each other for so long."

Phillips reflects further, "It was the beginning, yeah . . . really the beginning of heavy metal, I guess. But obviously, compositionally, I didn't write any of the songs. But when it came to doing any playing, I had always been given pretty much free rein. And I think that's why people ask me to play on their records — because they know they're going to get something pretty radically different. It's not conscious at all. It's very strange; I hear a song and then I play it, like I say, the way I figure it should be. The only thing that I used to find . . . I mean, we're going back to the '70s, early '80s, where I used to do a lot of sessions and a lot of records, and I was pretty — as Pete Townshend used to call me — 'anarchic.' And I think that's why he liked the way I played, because I did things that weren't safe. I really pushed the envelope.

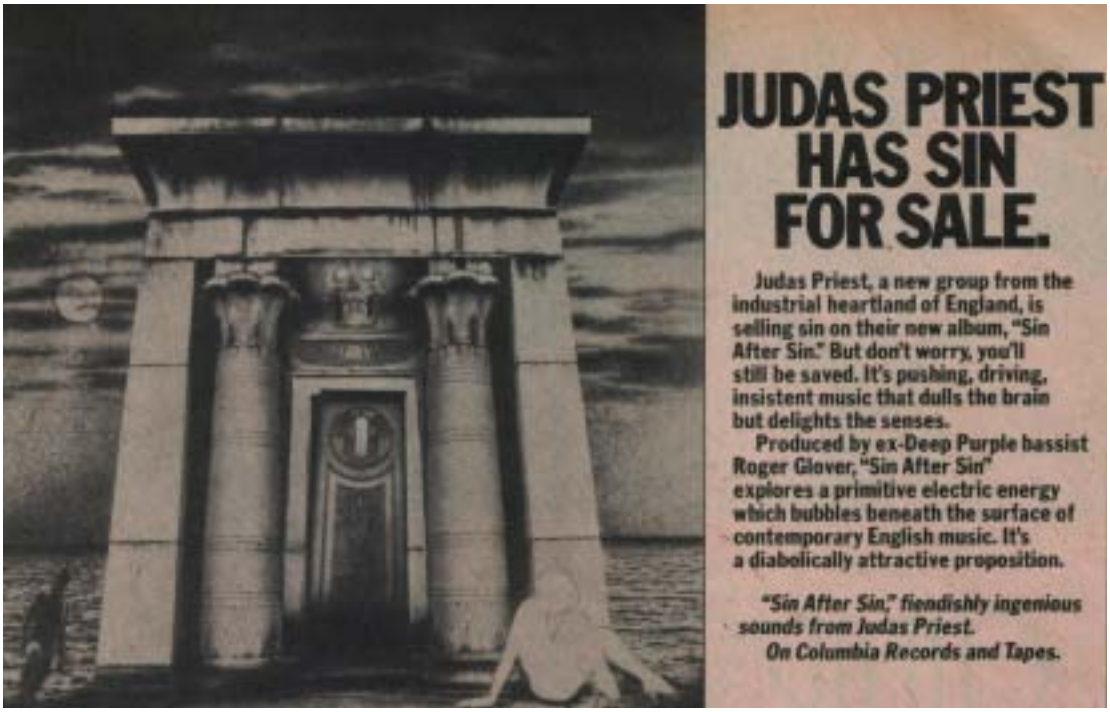
"And what I really used to do — because I enjoyed many types of music — if I was playing in a situation that was rock 'n' roll or metal — it wasn't called metal back then, but maybe heavy rock — but I was always trying to make it sound funky. Because I loved Band of Gypsies, and I loved the way Buddy Miles played with Hendrix. To me, it was the funk factor that really made it work. What it does is it grounds and puts groove to heavy rock, which most people were pretty light on at that time. Ian Paice with Deep Purple was fantastic,

that's what I love about his playing, because it wasn't heavy rock, but he always had a solid groove. John Bonham with Zep, same thing. But there were a lot of rock 'n' roll bands where the groove was . . . it came from a different place, and that's what I wanted to do. So while I was playing heavy metal with Judas Priest, I was thinking Bernard Purdy, Buddy Miles, Sly, you see what I mean? Actually, nobody had any idea that's what I was thinking, but that's what I was thinking: let's place it in a groove that is more funk than metal. Now obviously, you probably can't hear that, but what it does is gives it a really good grounding. And vice versa when I used to do sort of the funk sessions — I played with Edwin Starr, Olympic Runners and all sorts of things like that — I used to put more of a thrashy rock 'n' roll approach to it, more splashy high hats, more openness, especially the open sound, which I really like, which is totally wrong for funk. You see what I mean? That's where, I guess, in terms of any influence or any style, that is what I brought to it."

Asked about the extent of his visit with the Priest, compared with his other famous metal session — the first Michael Schenker Group album — Simon says, "Oh god, we did one day's rehearsal, and we were in Ramport for a week, and that was it. And I had my 20th birthday; I do remember that [laughs]. It was February of '77, and I don't think it was any longer than a week. And with Michael Schenker, we did one rehearsal, one afternoon, and the record, again, was probably about a week. Typically in those days, tracking used to be seven to ten days."

"Oh, they were fine! They were doing great," recalls Simon, asked about Priest's chemistry during his tenure. "This is the other thing; when you get down to it, every band is made up of one or two key people. They are the writers, they know where everything is. And it's no slight to the other guys; they are the backbone of the band, but they tend to be a little quieter, because they know where the music is coming from. The problems you get, usually, are with the main artist, which in this case is Glenn. He's the guy that really drives it. Rob obviously had a hand in all the lyrics and a big part of the writing, and K.K. was actually in the control room most of the time with Roger Glover. And Roger . . . the most friction you will get will be between the producer and the main guy in the band. Every single album you make, there are differences of opinion and it can get quite heated, quite passionate. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as it doesn't get unproductive. And normally, a good healthy disagreement and a rethink is not bad, because sometimes you're both going down the wrong path. But in terms of that project, everybody was great. I got on very well with the band. I knew Roger as well, so maybe in some ways, it was quite handy because we had one guy, like myself, who was very experienced in making records, and being in that position, joining a band for a week — that was sort of what I was doing quite a lot of, I guess [laughs]. In a certain way, I could be the leveler or the catalyst between the producer and the lead guy."

"Yeah, that may be coincidence," reflects Simon, on the idea that his style really propelled the band forward into the technical dexterity and speed demonstrated all over *Sin After Sin*, but even more so on *Stained Class* and to a lesser extent, *Killing Machine*. "If what I contributed changed what happened to them, then that's fantastic, that's great. I can't take the credit

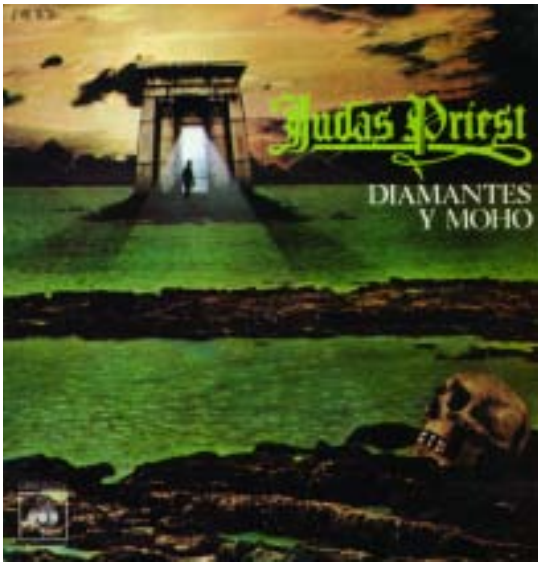

JUDAS PRIEST
HAS SIN
FOR SALE.
Judas Priest, a new group from the industrial heartland of England, is selling sin on their new album, "Sin After Sin." But don't worry, you'll still be saved. It's pushing, driving, insistent music that dulls the brain but delights the senses.
Produced by ex-Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover, "Sin After Sin" explores a primitive electric energy which bubbles beneath the surface of contemporary English music. It's a diabolically attractive proposition.
"Sin After Sin," fiendishly ingenious sounds from Judas Priest.
On Columbia Records and Tapes.

for that, really. Because Glenn wrote the songs and I just played them from my perspective and from the experience I had playing music."

Judas Priest's third album, *Sin After Sin*, would hit the racks in April of 1977, on CBS in the U.K., Columbia in the U.S. and Canada, and Epic in Japan. As mentioned, rehearsals for the album had been conducted at Pinewood Studios, known for James Bond and *Superman* production work. Accommodations were at a nearby convent, with nuns running a bed and breakfast. Apparently, perhaps taking a liking to the band's religious name, they had asked Priest to play at a garden party they were putting together, a gig that did not come to fruition.

The album would be recorded in January of '77 at Rampart Studios (which was owned by The Who) in Battersea, with Mark Dodson as engineer helping out Roger. Mixing would take place at Wessex Studios, Highbury, London. For artwork, CBS art director Roslav Szaybo hired on Irish-born art school grad Bob Carlos Clarke as illustrator — Clarke went on to become a top erotic photographer, working mostly in black and white, and produced five photography books before dying in March of 2006 at the age of 57. Cause of death was reported as suicide via a leap in front of a London commuter train, although his publicist has called the death accidental. Before his worldwide fame, he would also work on cover art for Barclay James Harvest, Band of Joy, Pete Townshend, Ric Ocasek and Bonnie Tyler.

Once inside the record, the listener got to hear the new, gleaming, impressive and finessed Judas Priest through opening track "Sinner," a song one might liken to Deep Purple's "Flight of the Rat" given its hummable, serviceable chug, its immediacy and its melody. Come break time, Rob raises the apocalyptic tale to



new heights of urgency, accompanied by riffing that is elegant, then downright elegiac. A gorgeously groovy mellow respite occurs, strafed by bluesy, noisy guitars, before an eventual return to the previous premise and an intelligent heavy metal rise to crescendo. "Sinner" is ultimately an epic without resorting to epic length, its impressive religiosity positively springing from Rob's vocal performance and arrangements — all in all, a fiery, yet measured and sophisticated way to open the band's major label debut. Ian is wont to joke that "Sinner" was Ken's "party piece," given the theatrics he would inject into the back section of the song when performing it live to the max, Hill adding, "That's another epic song, a production piece. There are two or three different solo parts in it, intricate rhythm parts. It was a very involved track to put down. And it's another one we played onstage for a long time."

"We always tried to be different," says Hill, on "Sinner" and those times. "With every album, we always tried to take at least one step forward, make it a little bit better, a bit different from the previous one. But obviously, it always sounded like Priest, with the same musicians, same vocalist. We were really conscious of saying, oh yeah, we've got to do this, got to do that, to stay ahead of the game. It was a natural thing that came to us. Obviously, you listen to other people's material, but I don't think we looked at it from a competitive point of view at all."

Said K.K. of his approach to soloing, "Pretty mad and way out, really. I try to go to the areas of the instrument that hopefully no man has ever gone before [laughs]. I always try to be as innovative as I possibly can, and try to generate as much energy and excitement as I can. And I must say, the great Jimi Hendrix . . . I knew how that affected me. Because he literally was going to places no one had been before. So basically, in his footsteps, I try to do something a bit different, but pretty wild and frenzied: I like that sort of stuff. On record, in most cases, I just pick up the guitar and wail away. And the recorders are going, and often I'm thinking, 'Yeah, that's cool,' and I'm not generally happy to do too much more research. I might go in and refine a couple of parts. I try to keep it as natural as possible. Because I need to do it when I feel like doing it, so whatever naturally comes out, comes out. I like it to be as 'me' as much as possible."

The band's nimble, pop metal version of the Joan Baez ballad "Diamonds and Rust" comes next, Joan meeting the band in future years and finding them very nice boys, thanking them for turning the song into a considerable hit, its release as a single (backed with "Dissident Aggressor") helping drive the album to a #23 placement in the U.K. charts. The band had already worked the song up during the *Sad Wings of Destiny* sessions (as

suggested to them by Gull president David Howells) and so following CBS's idea of trying to break the band with a cover, they thought they'd pull out the familiar track again. As Roger mentioned, the polite metal gallop of the song necessarily recalls what Glover achieved with "This Flight Tonight" for Nazareth three years earlier.

"Starbreaker" comes next, the song introduced by Simon and his drums, the sound of which . . . well, Glover's production on this record is decidedly non-heavy metal. There isn't much bottom end. It's pretty much an "intellectual" sound. Nonetheless, the guitars are molten on this one, with Rob spitting out his curious, ambiguous tale with venom, but from somewhat of a remote area within the mix.

"Last Rose of Summer" would be the band's most seriously layered and considered ballad to date. Bluesy of vibe, it's actually not a funeral dirge as was the band's predilection one and two albums back with lighter music (another habit Priest may have picked up from Sabbath). Still, lyrically, one can look upon this song as in the same family as Atkins' morose "Winter" sentiment, winter of course being the most heavy metal of seasons.

Side two of the original vinyl opened with the manic panic of "Let Us Prey/Call for the Priest," one of a handful of songs that can claim serious legacy with respect to the origins of speed metal, Deep Purple's "Fireball" perhaps achieving that status first. Priest continue to raise the bar with respect to fireworks, acrobatics, dexterity and sophistication, goaded on by the dynamo behind the kit. Hill keeps pace, K.K. and Glenn riff like demons, and Rob bestows upon the world the increasingly

intense vocal operatics that would earn him the title of Metal God.

"Raw Deal" follows, and one can't help read Rob's lyric as a sort of paean to gay cruising — once he came out, he pretty much admitted as much, quite surprised that so few people got it. Some of his best lines are in there (and amusingly, it was the reference to Fire Island that eventually started to raise eyebrows), plus some innovative phrasing, a necessity due to Glenn's innovative riffing and Phillips' funk end around. An admirable, lesser celebrated Priest composition, this one's a smart cookie, demonstrating the band's skill and courage to break rules like their cohorts in Queen or Sabbath or Zeppelin.

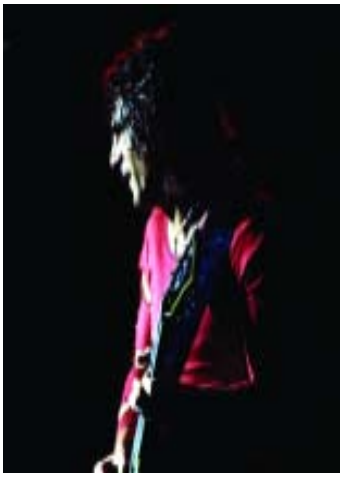
"Here Come the Tears" finds the band back in listless, despondent terrain when courting mellow music. Yet really, the song is more like a proto-power ballad, jagging along to heavy, doomful chording circa Sabbath as Rob howls impressively, harrowingly, over a wide groove

Richard Galbraith

punctuated by Phillips' precise, tightly tuned and attuned tom patterns. It all serves as preamble to "Dissident Aggressor," a corker of a heavy metal construct, a furnace blast of brainiac metal, a critical tour de force that also crushes. Arguably, this right here is the pinnacle of Priest's front-edge writing, even if three decades of records have come to pass since its impressive jag. One wonders if Glenn saw the song becoming what it did, for really it is Simon Phillips that sends it into the jazzosphere. Phillips plays the song as Neil Peart might, also introducing the trashed cymbal effect most attributed to Bill Bruford on King Crimson's *Red* album. The song tugs and shoves, just like the lyric, just like Rob's guttural-to-soaring vocal, just like the violent leads. The band continues to raise its game and press on to the track's all-too-soon close, and that's it — *Sin After Sin* ends on a symphony of highs.

K.K. concurs that Simon lends a big boost to "Dissident Aggressor." "Yes he does, and I really think the album kicks in with that one. I mean, that was one of the last things we did, and that would've been a great starting point, if the album would have opened with that song. On that one, Glenn and myself were there solely for the musical side, whereas Rob was really reaching out on an international level, really, to be heard with his lyrics."

Press for the band was still thin on the ground, but *Circus*' Michael Bloom managed a fairly lengthy (and tepid but encouraging) review of the record, calling *Sin After Sin* "a very balanced album with the right amount of raunch, no real rough edges, and a ballad just where you need one to mellow out — in short, a joy to any A&R man's heart." Bloom then singles out Simon Phillips, calling him "one of England's top five drummers, a sort of heavy Phil Collins with an unbelievable double bass



Richard Galbraith

Richard Galbraith

Adrian Boot/RetnaUK

drum roll and other behemoth chops. So this is the best-drummed record of its kind in history."

In the same issue of *Circus*, a short piece ran on the band, with Rob talking about wanting to move to New York and live in a skyscraper, as well as wanting to dance for a living, like Fred Astaire, a comment I recall following him closely for a few years, causing no end of grief to this writer as a young pup, a junior headbanger who saw this new heavy metal band as the best in existence. The writer of the article, Hannah Spitzer, as well as Rob, briefly acknowledge that punk was garnering all the attention at the time in the music industry. True, *Sin After Sin* was issued smack at the point of punk's peak, yet history would record the genre more as a curious cultural movement, with the record and ticket sales still going to all those bands we call classic rock today. Also of note, the piece erroneously listed Alan Moore as Priest's drummer.

For the *Sin After Sin* tour, Priest would end up collaring one Les "Feathertouch" Binks to pound the skins, Les being a percussionist of similar technicality to Simon, also a double bass drum player, a rare commodity back in the late '70s. Curiously, like Simon, Binks would also claim earlier Roger Glover connections, having worked on Roger's *Butterfly Ball* project, as well as plying the skins for Eric Burdon. *Butterfly Ball* morphed toward Eddie Hardin's *Wizard's Convention* project, and Les was there for that too, as well as two records with obscure pop act Fancy.

Bob Catley from U.K. prog rockers Magnum recalls their 1977 support slots to the Priest as career-defining. "We had recorded the first album, *Kingdom of Madness*, but it wasn't due to come out for some reason until '78. And we thought it was a good idea . . . you know, let's get out there. We were doing residencies and our own gigs around the Midlands, and then Jet Records got us onto the Judas Priest tour, which

Jill Furmanovsky

was their first major European tour. And we had a great time, 'Oh, here we are, we've arrived, we're on a proper stage with a lot of people in front of us.' Not a lot of them knew who we were, but we went down very, very well. And it taught us a lot about how to get on in the business. What we do now, we take for granted. You make an album, go out on tour, and you do interviews and all that, but we didn't know about any of that at the time. It was all new to us. So it was a bit of an eye-opener, the Judas Priest tour. I used to have a couple chats with Rob Halford on occasion, when they were soundchecking, and when we went in to soundcheck ourselves. We would talk on occasion and have a beer. But you don't really mix, you know? You have your own band and your own crew and kind of leave people alone. Nice guys though, all from Wolverhampton. And over the years, you meet them again and you talk about stuff you'd done together years ago."

Out on the first leg of the British tour, perhaps spurred on by getting away with his "Raw Deal" lyric, Rob was raising eyebrows with his flamboyant dress, his prim, shortened coif, his eyeliner and his stage moves. The *Sin After Sin* campaign left England in May of '77, Priest finding themselves supporting REO Speedwagon as part of their first trip to the States. Dates were also logged with Ted Nugent, Foreigner, Head East and Starz, with the highlight of the trip being Day on the Green in Oakland, playing to 60,000 at a show at 11:30 in the morning, later headlined by the mighty Led Zeppelin. It is said that Robert Plant personally had asked for the baby band from his hometown of Birmingham to help fill out the Bill Graham spectacle, and in retrospect, Priest look upon their two shows with Zeppelin as the crystallizing moment of the band's career, despite Rob earning himself a hail of boos by greeting the Oakland crowd as San Franciscans.

STAINED CLASS

(CBS, February '78)

Side 1

Exciter
White Heat, Red Hot
Better by You, Better than Me
Stained Class
Invader

Side 2

Saints in Hell
Savage
Beyond the Realms of Death
Heroes End

5

"WE JUST SET OUT TO WRITE THE FASTEST TRACK EVER WRITTEN"

– Stained Class

Killer modernized logo strapped on front, and an artsy upper echelon cover to boot (although one could mistake it for a disco album), *Stained Class* arrived February 10, 1978, proving that the technical metal madness of its predecessor, *Sin After Sin*, was a mere half-step along a plane reserved for the masters smack in the middle of a near superhuman run of creativity.

Chris Walter / Photofeatures

Les Binks, touring drummer for the last record, would distinguish himself on the new album as a more-than-able replacement for Simon Phillips, and all around him, the band was intent on intense fireworks to match his heat, start to finish.

Says Ian of *Stained Class*, "That was Dennis Mackay that recorded that. It was done in Chipping Norton, Coxwolds, that beautiful place [laughs]. And on that album of course was the infamous 'Better by You, Better than Me,' which actually Dennis didn't produce that one. That was an extra track that we ended up putting on, as the album was a little bit short."

Dennis MacKay had engineered for the likes of Supertramp, David Bowie and Jeff Beck, but his productions were more in the jazz world; Al Dimeola, Stanley Clarke and Mahavishnu's John McLaughlin all benefited from his deft touch. Since Priest, he's had a varied resume, with Pat Travers and Tygers of Pan Tang being closest to Priest genre-wise. In essence, here we had Priest repeating history. A jazzy drummer helped turn *Sin After Sin* into an upmarket oddball of a record, a pioneering note-dense heavy metal album of high construct. For *Stained Class*, it would be a producer from that same world who would serve much the same function, and oddly, most pertinently in the drum area, for this was not the way you produce heavy metal drums, but the heavy metal world was somehow better for it.

The recording of *Stained Class* took place in October and November of '77. The mix would be handled by Neil Ross at Trident. The aforementioned "Better by You, Better than Me" was

Judas Priest
STAINED CLASS
Judas Priest
EXCITER · WHITE HEAT, RED HOT
BETTER BY YOU, BETTER THAN ME
STAINED CLASS · INVADER
SAINTS IN HELL · SAVAGE
BEYOND THE REALMS OF DEATH
HEROES END
The new album from Judas Priest
is available from Friday 10th February 1978.
And from all Virgin Record Stores
at £1.00 off R.R.P.
from Saturday 11th February.

produced by James Guthrie after the original sessions. It is said the label wanted to try their luck again with a cover version, so the Spooky Tooth obscurity was recorded after the original sessions, at Utopia in London, at which time Dennis MacKay was unavailable for the job. Still the sound, for all intents and purposes, matches up, the entire album stepping politely out of the speakers with upper-crust high fidelity, featuring meticulous separation, scintillating treble, measured, pinpoint bass, and in totality, a level of precision not normally associated with heavy metal records.

Stained Class opened in explosive fashion with a legendary Les Binks drum intro, featuring a barrage of double bass drums — rare in that era — after which "Exciter" proper kicks in. Widely considered one of the early

Richard Galbraith

EVERY BOOK, FILM, ARTICLE AFTERWARDS WOULD HAVE COME UNDER FIRE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNBEARABLE FOR EVERYONE, HAD WE LOST.

speed metal classics (as mentioned, "Fireball," from '71, trumps it; as does Priest's own "Call for the Priest"), "Exciter" builds to a screeching crescendo, all the while Glenn and K.K. turning in classy, artful riffs and rhythm charges, and Rob showing his thespian skills, range and intensifying lyrical sophistication — a lot of words, many of them quite big, are stuffed into this road racer of a track. As well, the religious overtones and feel of Rob's pomp-filled phrasings lend the song the gravitas it needs, else it would likely fly off the rails.

"'Exciter,' that's just a classic Priest track," muses K.K., addressing its speed. "I think that one and 'Hell Bent for Leather' would be synonymous with the name Judas Priest. I think we just set out to write the fastest track ever written [laughs]. And the one before that would have been 'Call for the Priest' on *Sin After Sin* — that was the progenitor of it all, I think. *Stained Class* also saw the change of the band really going for the leather and the studs. We're very, very proud of that record, and proud of everything we've ever done. We had great times, obviously, recording the record. It was obviously full of great songs."

The Tipton composition "White Heat, Red Hot" follows, and Rob turns in another compli-

Richard Galbraith

cated, ambiguous but decidedly apocalyptic lyric, both tracks on the album thus far fitting the stated goal from two records back on *Sad Wings*, namely "big changes are gonna come." Tipton's riff is a circular classic, and the guitar sound is gorgeous. Priest change it up for a venomous double-speed chorus, before settling back into a funky groove the band's last drummer might have appreciated. Next up is the Spooky Tooth cover, "Better by You, Better than Me," written by keyboardist Gary Wright. It dovetails so nicely with the rest of the material, one might not notice it was a cover. It's quite riffy, the chorus is aptly grand and "religious" of vibe, like many high-minded Priest moments, and with those gorgeously tuned toms of Binks (much like Peart), the song bears enough of a Priest stamp that it doesn't disrupt the sequence of events. The track was issued as a single a month before the release of the album (backed with "Invader") but failed to chart.

The title track is next (countless times in the press, this album was called *Stained Glass*) and once again, Priest stuff a pert and perky, modern metal rocker with all sorts of "A" riffs, shifts in tempo, corners and creases. Rob does some of his highest singing, also using some of the sing-songy vocal melodies he had written seemingly effortlessly back in the golden era of the band. "Invader" offers more of the same post–Deep Purple perfection, Priest finding groove and goodly riffing while Rob turns in an amusing lyric on a subject dear to metal hearts, alien invasion. Of note, Glenn has called the quieter noise intro to this track, which features Echoplexes, "a bit timid."

Opening side two of the original vinyl was "Saints in Hell," Rob again using mostly the high end of his prodigious range. Lyrically, this is a colorful one, with all manner of man and beast joining in yet another apocalyptic battle, one that seems to involve good and evil in a religious sense, but also includes beings and creations from science fiction. It is possible — although a bit of a muddle — to see most of the album as part of the same fiery, astral tale, with the slick graphics of the album cover even

helping to flesh out a vibe Tipton was wont to call "cybernetic."

"Savage" is next, and it's a bit of a departure, heavier and darker than the rest of the album, almost Sabbatharian, with Rob writing a classy lyric mourning the white man's vanquishing of "savages" and their lands. It's a smart, poignant lyric, helping to underscore this band and this album as something a few notches above standard heavy metal fare.

Next up was "Beyond the Realms of Death," a dark and pure heavy metal "power ballad" of a serious type that would give rise to classics from Metallica like "Fade to Black" and "One." "That was the one that got us into trouble," recalls Glenn, of the song that brought the band the lawsuit we'll discuss in greater detail later in our *Ram it Down* chapter. "That's what thinking about that album brings back to me immediately, all that hullabaloo and nonsense surrounding it. I had to go to court every day in a suit, because they wouldn't let us in without a suit. And we had to listen to barefaced lies. But we were victorious in the end, so in a way we flew the flag for heavy metal. Because every book, film, article afterwards would have come under fire. It would have been unbearable for everyone, had we lost."

Adds K.K., speaking more so about the album as a whole, "That was the one with the so-called subliminal messages and the court case, so obviously, I don't know if the band has grown to distance themselves from that album [laughs]. Well, we wouldn't musically anyway, because they're all our babies."

Richard Galbraith

The song's mournful, passionate, despondent suicide theme would be cited as the fuel for a teenage suicide pact between two Reno, Nevada, fans. One friend died and another was greatly disfigured, dying later of a drug overdose. *Stained Class*'s cover art was even called into play, with the bar pattern (some call it a laser beam) seen as the path of a bullet. Strictly speaking, it was "Better by You, Better than Me" that was cited for subliminal messaging — i.e., backmasking — with "Beyond the Realms of Death" collared for its forward message.

Notes Al Atkins: "The big riff in the middle of 'Beyond the Realms of Death' sounds very much like a song I wrote called 'Life Goes On.' But it was a long time ago and I don't lose any

sleep over it." Indeed, that is one monster of a riff of which Al speaks, a ferociously angry and heavy break in a song that is mostly balladic, although heavy and Sabbath-like come chorus time. Bizarrely, the song is credited to Binks/Halford, reason being that Les had wandered into rehearsal one day, picked up a guitar and, being left-handed, turned it upside down, proceeding to write the song's opening pattern. K.K. has said it's the one and only time he'd ever seen Binks pick up a guitar, going so far as to say that Les wrote all of it, save for the solos!

"I love that song because whenever I sing it, emotionally, it takes me on a wonderful journey," reflects Rob on this morose and funereal classic. "I think about a lot of things when I sing that song. Obviously I think about my times with Priest. I also reflect on some of the unfortunate situations that happened with people in rock 'n' roll, and of course to some extent the fans, people who have difficulties in life and for one reason or another, want to end their life in different ways. But also it's a song that has a lot of strength, because it's talking about an individual surviving those difficult times."

Stained Class ends with "Heroes End," an ingenious inverted or backward-sounding riff placed on a bed of halting, marching rhythms, o'er which Rob laments the untimely deaths of a trio of talents (Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and James Dean), and how their passing transformed them into immortals. Halford's vocal is almost punky, sassy, and is a big part of the song's success, as is the additional, typically high-quality riffing that adds dimension to the track. "Heroes End" was also brought up during the aforementioned notorious suicide pact case, the argument being that the song glorified death by equating it with heroism.

IT'S A SONG THAT HAS A LOT OF STRENGTH, BECAUSE IT'S TALKING ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL SURVIVING THOSE DIFFICULT TIMES.

Richard Galbraith

Hitting the road, the band played a little over half the record, with the omissions being "Invader," "Saints in Hell," "Savage" and "Heroes End." The rest of the set was split evenly between emerging *Sad Wings* and *Sin After Sin* classics, with *Rocka Rolla* ignored in its entirety. January and February of '78 saw the band blanket England and Scotland. Spring saw them in the U.S. (Glenn has bad memories of supporting a none-too-sociable or helpful Foghat), after which five milestone dates would be logged in Japan from July 25th to August 5th of '78.

HELL BENT FOR LEATHER

(CBS, February '79)

Side 1

Delivering the Goods
Rock Forever
Evening Star
Hell Bent for Leather
Take on the World

Side 2

Burnin' Up
The Green Manalishi
(with the Two-Pronged Crown)
Killing Machine
Running Wild
Before the Dawn
Evil Fantasies

6

"HERE WE ARE, THE ULTIMATE METALHEADS"

– Hell Bent for Leather

By 1979, Judas Priest had spent fully a decade being ignored in one form or another. Now with three superlative, groundbreaking heavy metal masterpieces to their name, they were still pretty much without commercial success. Unfortunately, the band's next record, called *Killing Machine* in the U.K. and *Hell Bent for Leather* for the U.S. market, wasn't going to change that dismal situation appreciably. But what it would do is provide the band with a bridge concept, the bridge to a sound that would bring them the success they so long deserved.

THE BAND WAS JUST SHOWING ITS MUSCLE AND CAPABILITY TO GO THROUGH LOTS OF DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS AND PARAMETERS.

Warren Weaver

How much the band in retrospect appreciate the beauty of *Hell Bent for Leather* is essentially . . . not much. Perhaps blinded by actually making some money for once, the guys tend to look upon its dumbed-down follow-up, *British Steel*, most fondly. In this writer's opinion, however, some of the greatest records in rock are such bridge albums, records that seem to contain the underground striving vibe from earlier records, combined with some sort of new spark or excitability that is all the more rich because it finds an old band making new discoveries. Ergo, I consider *Hell Bent for Leather* to be the greatest Priest platter of them all, because it possesses the perfect blend of the band's feverish old school technicality, and the sturdy, chopped-down songfulness — the new "discovery" — of say, *British Steel* or *Screaming for Vengeance*.

What's more, I consider this record to be the best-sounding Priest album of them all, for the first time, heavy, but wholly exempt from the trendy '80s and '90s production traps the band would stumble into on every record going forward, save for *Angel of Retribution*. Indeed, the sound on *Hell Bent for Leather* is carnal, dirty, but still loaded up with all the frequencies you want covered. It even has adequate bottom end, which to some extent was missing on its two prim predecessors. Oddly, the productions of *Rocka Rolla* and *Sad Wings* are almost more "correct" and full range than those afforded the extreme, eccentric third and fourth from the band.

Killing Machine would be recorded in August of 1978 at Utopia and at CBS studios in London, with the mix handled at Utopia. The album was produced by James Guthrie, making a return trip after handling the one

Judas Priest tears off the cloth
and puts on the leather.
Down on your knees and repent if you please!
Judas Priest is here! "Hell Bent for Leather"
On Columbia Records and Tapes.

late, errant track on *Stained Class*. Shortly, he would distinguish himself as the producer for Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, and later Queensryche's full-length debut, *The Warning*. The album was issued two months later in October of 1978 in the U.K. and Japan, and in February of the following year, with the new title and one extra track, in North America. "Ironically enough," notes Rob, "we were told by the label that *Killing Machine* was too much of a heavy statement to use in America and Canada, so they suggested *Hell Bent for Leather*." The framing at the time was that the title's "murderous implications" would have been too much for the large record retailers to want to put the album on its racks.

"James Guthrie, I believe, was recommended by Columbia," recalls Rob, switching tack. "He came highly recommended because of his engineering and production skills. I think if you look at those three albums back to back, there is a tremendous growth. From *Sin After Sin* to *Stained Class* to *Killing Machine*, there's an incredible sense of adventure going on. So we wanted a producer who would be able to accommodate all of the things we were thinking of doing. If you look at some of the songs on there, they are pretty diverse. I mean you put 'Hell Bent for Leather' against 'Killing Machine' or 'Burnin' Up,' and those two songs especially are a real stretch from songs like 'The Ripper' or 'Victim of Changes.' I think the band was just showing its muscle and capability to go through lots of different dimensions and parameters, and we wanted a producer who could come on the same journey with us and not just some guy that was stuck in one particular mode of production ideas."

"I know that that record by its own merits, stands alone," adds Rob. "They all do, they all have something special about them, and something different to say. And I just recall that it was a really cool experience recording with James Guthrie. It was just another one of those things where the band was specifically at, at that moment in time."

The cover art for this record was gorgeous. Featuring a slight update to the Priest logo debuted one record back (as well as slight text color variations for the two territories), the sleeve included an introduction to the leather and studs of heavy metal, but through a classy, artistic, oblique presentation.

"That was done by Roslav Szaybo, from the art department at CBS in London," notes Ian. "He did a couple of them. On *Hell Bent for Leather*, for that effect with the sunglasses, he actually got an air rifle and he had dozens of pairs of sunglasses and shot them with the air rifle until he got the right effect. And then he lit it from behind to get all the colors right."

Muses K.K., "We were talking about the artwork for that album, and how it probably was the archetypal beginning of it all, with the leather belt around the head of the figure. I think that probably is the definitive beginning of heavy metal — maybe. Maybe I'm wrong, but definitely for Judas Priest, that says it all. Here we are, the ultimate metalheads."

Killing Machine opened with a shattering anthem of confidence, "Delivering the Goods" being a masterful display of pacing, riffing, surges and hanging back, growls and seductive crooning. It is perhaps the perfect Priest experience, the track delivering the goods of which Rob speaks in every way, from overall production, to effects, guitar sound, heavy and grooving drum performance, and above all, watertight construction — witness both its smart start and the "Rock and Roll"–inspired drum barrage finale from Binks.

"Rock Forever" is next, and again Priest triumphs. Tight, technical yet evocative of a blues, this one's a corker, driven by a little

Warren Weaver

double bass drum from Binks, as well as Rob's passion-filled metal-loyal vocal. Saxon and a dozen New Wave of British Heavy Metal bands would take this defense of their music concept further, but with this quick, perky number, Priest were setting the stage for a decade flooded with metal music.

"Evening Star" arrives mid-side, and a vanilla-safe comparison to Deep Purple's "Never Before" is in order. Rocky but not all that creative, or even attractive from a hook point of view, it is a song that seemed destined for launch as a single by those who wanted to play it safe — a little melody, a little hard rock, not much of anything. Still, Ian's bass line is a funky blast, as is that little tom fill from Binks.

Next up is the album's short, shocked rocker, "Hell Bent for Leather" being note-dense speed metal with attitude — something missing from previous fast ones from a band formerly a bit behaved and looking down their spectacles. Opening with an effects-drenched assault of drums, the song settles into a brisk

I THINK THAT PROBABLY IS THE DEFINITIVE BEGINNING OF HEAVY METAL — MAYBE. MAYBE I'M WRONG, BUT DEFINITELY FOR JUDAS PRIEST, THAT SAYS IT ALL. HERE WE ARE, THE ULTIMATE METALHEADS.

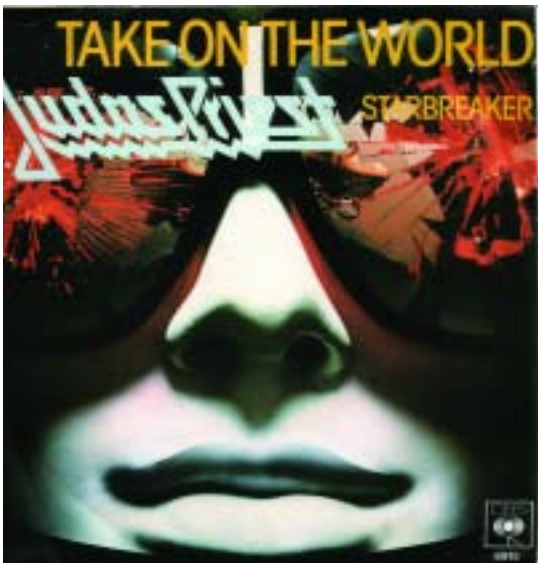
HELL BENT FOR LEATHER
As recorded by JUDAS PRIEST

Purple-ish recline, an over-the-top pre-chorus and a hugely anthemic chorus. Come solo time, Priest gives us a nod to its religiously toned past, the melodies here almost baroque. It is said that the title might have been a lift from the Blues Brothers, and that project band's covering of a song called "Rawhide."

Closing side one of the original vinyl was "Take on the World," another metal-is-all anthem set, innovatively, to propulsive drums, a bit of guitar, no bass and lots of layers of vocals. The song ended up becoming a bit of a soccer stadium staple, much like its brethren anthem from Queen, "We Will Rock You." Asked about "Take on the World," Hill explains that "these types of songs weren't really recorded as singles. They were just recorded as rock anthems. The fact that they were commercial is because of the lyric, 'Take on the world.' 'United,' same thing. But we never consciously went out and wrote a single per se."

Come side two, another less heralded Priest classic drips with magnetism. "Burnin' Up" is funky, melodic, yet still supercharged with rock-solid guitars. Again, there's a confidence and a swagger there, as musicians, frontman and producer conjoin for an upper crust metal experience. The break is a bit of a psychedelic respite similar to Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," from which the band emerges vicious and delicious, molten guitars battling and caterwauling until one final, victorious lapse into a reprise of the song's magical first verse.

Fleetwood Mac's "The Green Manalishi (with the Two-Pronged Crown)," comes next in the sequence, but only on the North American issue of the album. Again, unsurprisingly, the label thought it might be a good idea to record a cover to float as a single. "Better by You, Better than Me" came about this way, as did "Diamonds and Rust." Priest



Warren Weaver

figured they would only keep the song if they had put their personal stamp on it, and that was accomplished in spades. This leaden heavy metal behemoth barely resembled the early Fleetwood Mac original. Its celebrated Priest chug is an instant invitation to headbang, and it's been a live favorite ever since.

Quips Glenn, "It was a song we liked. Peter Green has always been a bit of a hero to me anyway, a great white English blues guitar player and a great songwriter. I don't know whether I suggested it. In fact, I don't think I did. But it would have been one of us, I think, as opposed to 'Diamonds and Rust,' which I think was suggested by the record company, and then we kicked it around."

Adds Ian, "I know at one time we were going to do 'Race with the Devil' by a band called Gun, the Gurvitz brothers, and that's one of the extra tracks we recorded that we didn't use. We went away, and again they were asking us to do a cover version with a view toward getting it on radio, and somebody came up with that. We thought, yeah, that's great. We were all into Fleetwood Mac and Peter Green. And I think it was Ken and Glenn who got their heads together and revamped it." Rumors persist of the band also, at one time, working up "Play with Fire" by the Rolling Stones.

"Again, this all came off the back of the experience we had with songs like 'Diamonds and Rust,'" recalls Rob. "I think because that was so well received, and since the label, particularly from America, was hoping to get some music that they could use as a crossover into American radio, we were approached with a number of different possibilities. And someone suggested 'Green Manalishi.' My recollection is that that was the one track that we were excited about approaching."

People have speculated that Peter Green's "Manalishi" lyric is in reference to the seductive allure of money, and that it was part of what was pushing the enigmatic guitarist into mental illness. A strong argument can also be made that it refers to acid and acid flashbacks, Green once saying that he "took acid and never came back." Turns out the story with the most substance contains elements of both. Green once intimated that the Manalishi was an elastic-banded wad of paper money he once saw, proffered as payment for a gig. The wad was stood up on end and then fell away in two directions, looking like a crown, after which the word "manalishi" came to him. In other interviews, Green has more plainly explained that it was simply a song about money, about a working guitarist getting more of it than he deserved, more of it than he personally could handle.

The band's original title track came next, "Killing Machine" being another one of these lesser known Priest gems, the band going for a minimalist, down-wound rhythm, again, illustrating the adventurous nature of this album, this idea that, as Glenn has suggested, the record contains an astonishing range of emotions and styles.

K.K. seems to intimate that the band had attempted too much on records previous to this one. Asked if *Hell Bent for Leather* represented a move away from the fast, scientific writing of *Stained Class*, he concurs, "Yes, an easing off a bit. Because you can actually try too hard in the studio, that's for sure. You can become a victim of your own endeavors, really." Too clever, perhaps? "Yeah, exactly [laughs]. They always say you can get sucked up into your own ass if you're not careful in the recording studio. And there's a lot of truth in that."

Asked whether he viewed *Hell Bent for Leather* as more of a flamboyant record than its predecessors, Halford is reticent. "You know, even today I'm pretty uncontrollable with where I'm potentially going to go next. I think it's just because I have this mental ability. I have a very, very broad mind for anything that's interesting or I could find potentially entertaining as a lyric, both from what goes on inside of me as a person and from what I've witnessed in the rest of the world, whether it's on the street, the TV, or the radio, conversations with friends. I'm just absorbing all of this stuff. So I think that's where it was with the music at

Warren Weaver

Warren Weaver

that time and how it affected me to write songs like 'Burnin' Up' and 'Hell Bent for Leather.' You just sit there and think about the possibilities. I mean, there's no rules. That's what I like about it. There really are no rules about what you can do with lyrics in music. But even though there's always been a certain portion of metal being this kind of escapist, fantasy, illusion world, I was always looking for some real issues to talk about."

"There was always that in Priest," says Rob, asked if there was any degree of friction in the band during the *Hell Bent for Leather* days. "There was always that there. Everybody wanted to do everything else. I would have liked in Priest, at that point, to go in the direction of a band like Queen, for example. If you really sit down and have a complete understanding of the mind and the music of Judas Priest, it's very much that kind of Queen-like approach. You can do anything. Just look at what Judas Priest has done, the different kinds of music that we've created. It's remarkable, really. I think a lot of people miss that. They just look at it from album to album. But if you look at the diversity and all the adventures that Priest has had, it's remarkable. I don't think there's ever been, or will ever be, another metal band that can make those kinds of things happen, and make them stick. When you look at what Priest did in terms of the great writing and the experimentation that it pursued, there were similar elements to what Queen was doing. There is always a moment where you can go further. I've always believed that you don't set rules for yourself. You should be prepared to push and stretch and take risks. And that's what that band did continuously. Although in their mind, Queen weren't taking risks, they just continued to do what they do. But they were carefree about what people thought about where they went with their music, and I just admire that."

But disagreements about direction reared their head within Priest time and time again, though given the band's reticence in interviews, you rarely heard about them. "All the time, yeah. But that's the way it should be. You can't

Warren Weaver

just sit down and nod your head and go, 'Yeah, OK, let's do this.' You've got very strong characters and personalities in any successful band. I don't care who they are. It's never smooth sailing. It's always about pushing for what you want to hear, and what you want to try, and getting the other person to think the same way as you do, to make a good song better. That was always the approach. We always said, 'Well, OK, I'm not quite getting this yet, but let's work on it a bit' and we'd massage it and make it complete. One thing I do recall is that over all my time with Priest, when we went into the studio, we said, 'Let's start from scratch. Let's see what we can do with new ideas,' although we would pull a riff from a previous Friday and work it into something new. But essentially it was OK, it's a new record, let's start fresh."

THEY ALWAYS SAY YOU CAN GET SUCKED UP INTO YOUR OWN ASS IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL IN THE RECORDING STUDIO. AND THERE'S A LOT OF TRUTH IN THAT.

"Running Wild" comes next in *Hell Bent for Leather*'s canny sequence, and you can pair this one with "Rock Forever" as a crystallized, compact statement of metal intent, the band coming up with a gorgeous-yet-brief rocker light on its feet, efficient of construction. "Before the Dawn" is the record's token ballad, and it at least retains the somber nature of Priest and what the band was busy building. Not unlike "The Last Rose of Summer," or more so anything funereal and quiet from Sabbath, why this was picked as a single is a bit of a mystery.

Hell Bent for Leather closes with "Evil Fantasies," another lumbering Sabbatharian number in tone and tune with "Killing Machine," earlier on the same side. Again, the band is confident enough to play very slowly, rife with spaces and pregnant pauses. Top-notch riffs are all over the place, as they are on the rest of this solid but varied and well-sequenced record. The song's almost Nazareth-like double time finale is an excellent way to close out this bruising, insistent, dynamic record. Priest could

WE JUST TREATED HIM LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN BEING, THE WAY GAY PEOPLE SHOULD BE TREATED.

Warren Weaver

no longer be ignored, and with what they had single-handedly accomplished for the genre, neither could heavy metal, which was about to enjoy ten intense years of commercial success.

Hitting the road, however, Priest would be in support of a record that had hit a mere #34 on the U.K. charts and a paltry #128 on America's Billboard rankings. It was not for lack of trying; the label floated a variety of singles. "Evening Star" was issued, backed with a live version of "Beyond the Realms of Death" (from the Agora in Cleveland, May 9, 1978); the band was rewarded with a #53 placement back home, with the nifty clear 12˝ version of this one including "Green Manalishi" as its third track. The U.S. chart placement on this one was #67. Then there was "Before the Dawn," backed with "Rock Forever." "Take on the World" featured "Starbreaker" live as its flip, from that same Cleveland show, reaching #14 stateside (the U.K. 12˝ issue included a live version of "White Heat, Red Hot"). Into May of '79, CBS issued "Rock Forever," backed with "Green Manalishi." One might argue that until "Rock Forever" was trotted out, CBS had given priority to the three worst tracks on the record. Still, quite soon, estimates had the new album tripling the sales of *Stained Class*.

Lip-synched videos from *Top of the Pops* were produced to support "Take on the World" and "Evening Star," the latter receiving a cheap Christmas-ornament-style star for onstage spice. Lip-synched live footage of "Take on the World" was also whipped up, as were staged/semi-live clips for "Rock Forever" and "Killing Machine."

Recalls Ian, "'Evening Star' was out of the blue, really. It was an album track, and CBS decided that it was commercial enough for a single, so we ended up on *Top of the Pops*, playing it. On two [occasions] when we did *Top of the Pops*, we were playing our hometown, Birmingham, on the same evening. And on both occasions we were late. They forgave us the first time, but I don't think they ever forgave us the second time, the following tour, when exactly the same thing happened. They said, 'We'll get you on first; we'll record your part first, and you'll be able to get back.' Because obviously, the recording was in

Warren Weaver

London at the BBC studios there. And the last time, they had helicopters and aircraft standing by, but the weather was too bad. It was a nightmare really [laughs]. We were a good couple of hours late. But the audience, God bless them, they sort of sat there and waited for us."

For the *Top of the Pops* version of "Take on the World," the miming was obvious. Rob claps (his wrist!) while holding the mic loosely to his lips and Les Binks is barely touching his drums. Glenn can be seen working on his red leather image, but it is Rob who has really moved it along, looking a bit like a Nazi brownshirt who's combined the fashion sense of his superiors with nods to S&M. K.K. looks fairly metal in big black leather boots, but both Les and Ian . . . well, they could have dropped in from a Nashville hootenanny.

But there was no bullwhip. Donnie and Marie Osmond were scheduled for the same episode and Marie had said that it was either the whip or them, despite Rob charming Marie in the dressing room, telling her she didn't need any makeup, that she looked great without it.

For "Evening Star," Rob is now clean-shaven, with his hair bleached almost blond. But he's decked in leather, as are K.K. and Glenn, who is sporting his red pants, black jacket, white shoes look. Rob had said he always had had a problem with the band's wimpy attire, butted up against such loud, forceful music. Fed up with stealing things out of his sister's closet, it dawned on him that two worlds he was a part of — the heavy metal and the homosexual — wore the same clothes. Into a leather shop in London called Mr. S, and the proprietors started loading Rob and K.K. up with gear that sent the image even further into the world of S&M. Priest's trademark look was born.

"Well, we all knew he was gay," explains Ian, on this interesting dimension Priest shared with Queen, "and we just treated him like a normal human being, the way gay people should be treated. That's about as far as it goes. It's probably the worst kept secret in rock 'n' roll [laughs]. To be perfectly honest, I don't know if people were that particularly interested. I mean, what Rob eventually did, by announcing it to everybody, what's the big deal?"

"In the artistic world, sexuality means absolutely fuck all," adds K.K. "If you have an artistic temperament, you have an understanding about a lot of things. And it's just been there from day one. We've done so much traveling and roughing it. Jesus Christ, we used to sleep in the back of the van in Norway and Sweden and Germany, and we used to clean our teeth all together in the fucking snow. We

were all doing the same thing and it just wasn't an entity, know what I mean?"

Both Rob and Glenn have spoken repeatedly about the empowering quality of putting on the gear and hitting the stage, the synergy that happens when the costume and the music come together. Toward that end, the leathers keep getting heavier and the studs keep multiplying, even to this day, near to the point of distraction, especially when it comes to Rob and his celebrated mirror 'n' metal jacket. Rob has also stressed that given the competition in the world of rock 'n' roll, if you don't have great songs as well as an instantly identifiable image, you're going to be dead in the water.

Back on the *Killing Machine* tour, image was helping spice things up. Rob's use of his whip in "Genocide" had one critic up in arms thinking Rob was actually whipping the audience — eventually there were buttons being circulated that said "I was whipped by Rob Halford." "Genocide" also, for a brief time, featured Rob firing off blanks from a real machine gun, the stage winding up littered with shell casings. It was all too much for fire marshalls and the prop was short-lived.

The U.K. tour began in late October '78, and was pretty much intensive until November 24. In terms of a set list, much of the album would get played, save for the surprise deletion of "Evening Star," along with "Killing Machine" and "Before the Dawn" (understandable in both cases), and "Burnin' Up," a bit of a surprise as well, given that track's sturdy melody and metal heft. An interesting wrinkle was the persistence of "White Heat, Red Hot," a deep album track from *Stained Class* nestled in the middle of the set.

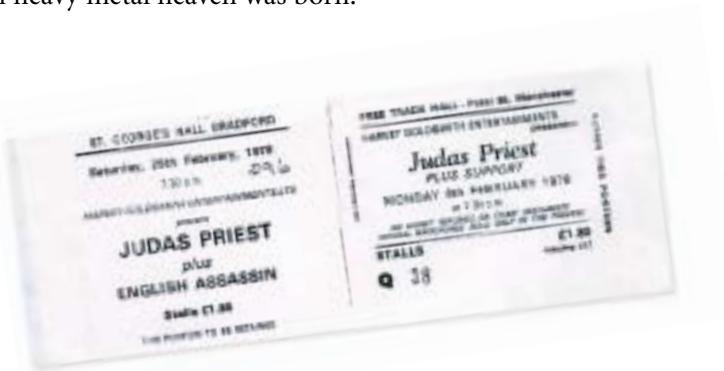
Four dates in Japan were notched in mid-February, from which the live *Unleashed in the East* album would be cut. After that, through

to May 6, America was assaulted, with Priest grouped with a host of bands struggling in and around their level, including Pat Travers, Point Blank, Wireless, Angel and UFO, the latter two verified as headlining over Priest. Back in the U.K. in late May, Priest were supported by NWOBHM oddballs Marseille, flipping back into support position for their jaunt with AC/DC in Europe.

In Dublin, Ireland, July 1, 1979, as direct support on a four-band bill to Status Quo, Priest were in a standoff with the local authorities over the use of the motorcycle. The police thought that it might incite violence, but Rob proved them wrong by bringing it out anyway, with no repercussions other than a happy headbanging crowd getting exactly what they wanted.

Back on the road in America, Priest supported Kiss in the fall of '79, for the first month of a two-and-a-half month second U.S. leg. Kiss records weren't selling so well anymore, but the shows were still huge and hugely successful. K.K. remembers the situation somewhat that way, noting that Kiss were on the wane and Priest seemed to be on the rise, intimating that the pairing might have underlined the idea that a changing of the guard had been set in motion. Evidence of Priest's rise was select triumphant solo dates, including three sold-out nights at L.A.'s Starwood Club, standing room only at New York's Mudd Club and two sold-out nights at Toronto's fabled El Mocambo. In any event, Priest said that Kiss — in particular Paul Stanley — was quite cordial, in contrast to bands like Ted Nugent and Foghat, the latter not offering a single word of encouragement. Eddie Van Halen was singled out as quite friendly as well from those days, the guitar master intimating that Van Halen used to play "Victim of Changes" in their set as they were coming up through the clubs.

Fortuitously for all involved, September 24, 1979, Priest was to hook up with Harley Davidson, Rob debuting in Milwaukee with a Harley for the first time, this being the area where Harleys are manufactured. Previously the band had used a Triumph Bonneville, but Harley was in a slump, getting ready to mount its much celebrated and publicized ascension to the intense brand recognition it enjoys today, and was looking for ideas. Priest's management, Arnakata, was able to buy Rob's first Harley for a single dollar, and a marriage made in heavy metal heaven was born.



UNLEASHED IN THE EAST

(CBS, September '79)

Side 1

Exciter
Running Wild
Sinner
The Ripper
The Green Manalishi
(with the Two-Pronged Crown)

Side 2

Diamonds and Rust
Victim of Changes
Genocide
Tyrant

7

"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE RUMORS"

– Unleashed in the East

Judas Priest's first live album, *Unleashed in the East — Live in Japan*, was to place Rob's S&M image and the ultimate heavy metal prop — Rob's ride — firmly in mind as the visual actualization of Priest — all they stood for, metal all the way, hell bent for leather.

WE WERE ALL READY TO START RANTING AND RAVING WHEN ABOUT 30 GUYS IN WHITE OVERALLS TURNED UP. BEFORE WE KNEW IT, EVERYTHING WAS UP.

"We just got on with our own thing," says Ian Hill, asked whether there was direct kinship with the burgeoning New Wave of Heavy Metal, a profusion of bands exploding the same year *Unleashed* launched Priest into wider rock 'n' roll consciousness. "We didn't feel part of a movement or anything. We were aware of other bands playing heavy music, but we didn't feel any sort of affinity with them. We were quite happy that the genre was becoming popular, but other than that, we just got on it."

The band's first Harley was given away in a contest a year after its heavy metal use. Rob claims to still have the second one proffered, although an early bike was also on loan to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. At the height of their fame in the early '80s, the band visited the Harley Davidson offices and was presented with custom leather jackets for all they had done to elevate the name of the brand.

But Priest was still, courageously, mainly about the music. While firing on all sixes with what are now considered no less than four of the greatest heavy metal albums of all time, the band briefly touched down in Japan to record this landmark live album.

Unleashed in the East would find Priest making an important hook-up, namely Tom Allom, who was brought in to produce the album, as much as a live album could be produced. Allom was signed to the same management company as Priest, and had been involved with the first four Sabbath records. Tom explains that his early assignments tended to be with bands managed by the Arnakata, these including Strawbs and The Tourists. Tipton has said that it took a few rounds at the pub to get in sync with Allom, the hard luck, rockscrabble upbringing of the band chafing against Allom's upper-middle-class sensibilities, Tipton adding however that Allom turned out to be an asset due to his diplomacy with competing band members, and his ability to get sounds.

Another key happenstance would be that the album would be mixed at Ringo Starr's Ascot-based Startling Studios (Starr had bought it from John Lennon), soon to be the cradle of the band's breakthrough album,

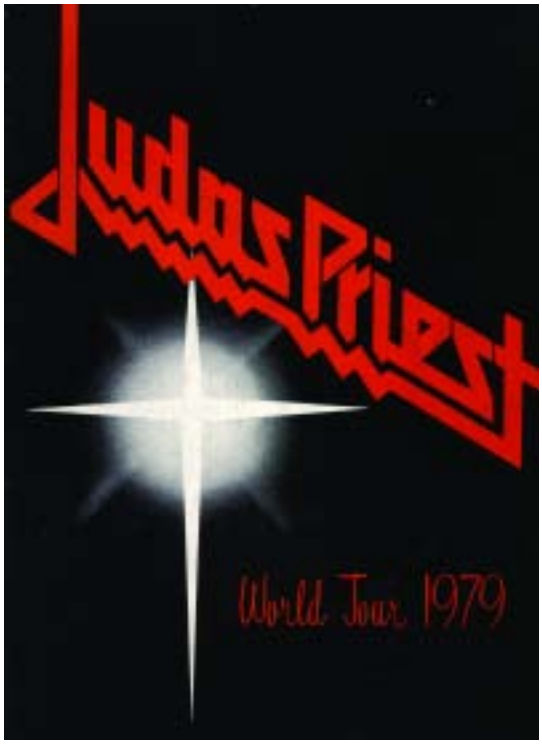
British Steel. Like the ubiquitous Manor Studios owned by Richard Branson, this facility was housed in a mansion nestled in acres of countryside, the perfect setting for a band wishing to re-focus and retool.

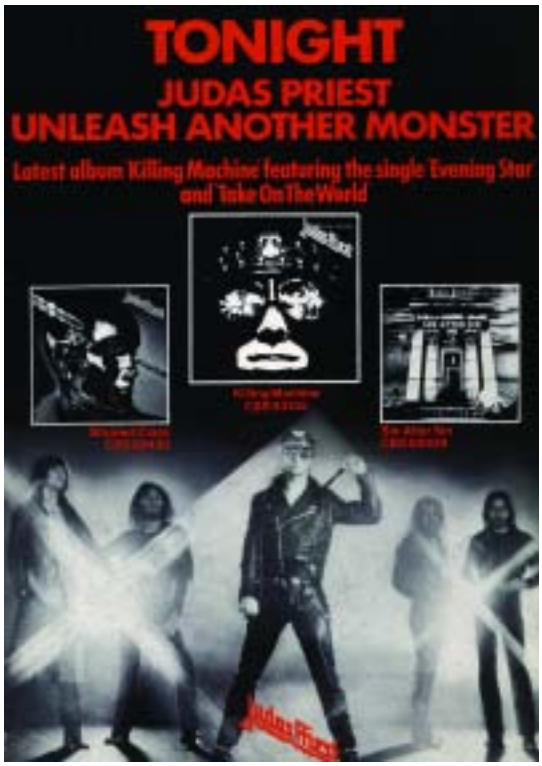
In any event, the retooling would come later. For now, Priest was all about underscoring all that had come before, presenting with all their hard-won experience an astonishing raft of great metal songs performed with formidable skill and explosive intensity. *Unleashed in the East* would contain eight Priest classics, but in Japan, the album — rechristened *Priest in the East* and with altered cover art — came with a bonus EP of fully a third more tracks cut from the same cloth. Fortunately, "Rock Forever," "Delivering the Goods," "Hell Bent for Leather" and "Starbreaker" would be issued as bonus tracks when Sony reissued all of the Columbia albums in 2001. Initial shipments of the album in the U.K. also included an EP, featuring three tracks, "Rock Forever," "Hell Bent for Leather" and "Beyond the Realms of Death," the latter also showing up as a b-side to "Rock Forever" two years later. Finally, "Evil Fantasies" would show up as the b-side on a "Living After Midnight" 12´´ in 1980. "Take on the World" and "White Heat, Red Hot" are the only set list inclusions that remain unissued.

Recalled Glenn of that inaugural 'round-the-world trek, "That was a trip and a half. It took us 14 hours to get there, and by the time we arrived, we were totally exhausted. The first gig was in Tokyo, and when we got to the hall, none of it was set up. We were all ready to start ranting and raving when about 30 guys in white overalls turned up. Before we knew it, everything was up."

Mused Halford, "Japan is still one of the most fascinating countries in the world that

AS THE CURTAIN WENT UP, ALL THESE BOUQUETS OF FLOWERS, PRESENTS, BALLOONS AND STREAMERS CAME FLYING ACROSS. WHEN WE TURNED AROUND, IT WAS LIKE BEATLEMANIA!

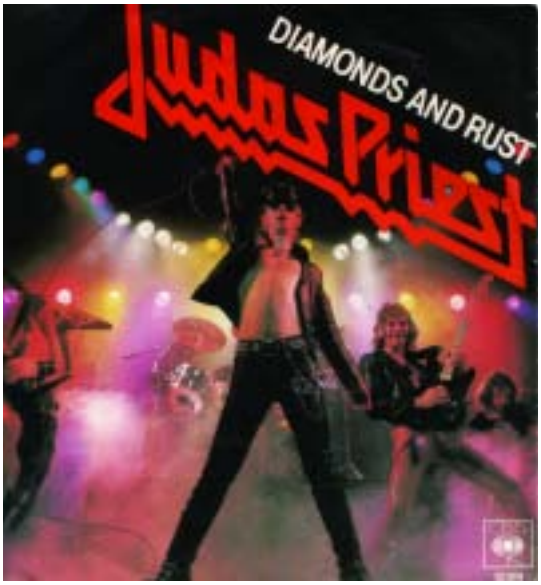



TONIGHT
JUDAS PRIEST
UNLEASH ANOTHER MONSTER
Latest album Killing Machine featuring the single Evening Star
and Take On The World

I've ever been to, and I find it remarkable that heavy metal is so big there. In those days, we used to start the show with our backs to the audience and a stage full of dry ice. As the curtain went up, all these bouquets of flowers, presents, balloons and streamers came flying across. When we turned around, it was like Beatlemania!"

The original *Unleashed in the East* is usually the lone single-record disc that shows up on the lists of greatest heavy metal live albums of all time journalists (myself included) crank out periodically. The others, as I've alluded to earlier, are all doubles, namely UFO's *Strangers in the Night*, Thin Lizzy's *Live and Dangerous*, Blue Öyster Cult's *On Your Feet or on Your Knees*, Scorpions' *Tokyo Tapes*, and of course, Kiss' *Alive!* In contrast, Priest keeps it tight, taut, rock-solid, yet bullet-barraged and worked with fire, which must have helped push the album to unexpected chart placements — #10 in the U.K. and #70 in the U.S.

The record starts fast, with a carnal, much less polite version of "Exciter." "Running Wild"

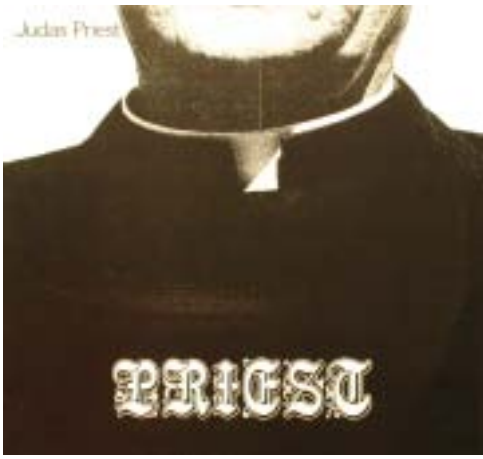


is a surprise second selection, the band then settling in with "The Ripper" and "Sinner," then pummeling the kidneys with "Green Manalishi." Requisite hit "Diamonds and Rust" gets as heavy as it can — which is not very. Still, this arguable low point was issued as a single, backed with "Starbreaker." Finally, the *Sad Wings* trilogy, "Victim of Changes," "Genocide" (with pointless extended intro) and "Tyrant," finish off the crowd.

When all was said and done, aside from the records above, no greater one hour of extreme metal classics had ever been assembled to date. Sabbath could have done it, yet at that point, they didn't have a live record. And then again, one wonders if at any point in their career they could have executed with this much flash. Deep Purple could have done it, but through two live records they chose to attach themselves to the dreary early '70s template, offering boring jams doubly lethal when stuffed into some of their sleepiest numbers. Zeppelin and Rainbow charted the same course, and thus *The Song Remains the Same* and *On Stage* are usually banished from the A-list. Although, to be fair, a large and vocal throng cites *Made in Japan* by Deep Purple as something special (unfathomable to this writer).

Still, shoving Priest into that double record pack, it was obvious which band represented a new guard. Amusingly, Priest were as old and experienced as any of them, but the band, through hard luck, ended up being forced to shape their sound in the corridors, spending five years traveling the motorways before putting out a debut album, and then, in doing so, making a pretty good one.

"Very little!" is Glenn Tipton's response to accusations that the record was heavily doctored and not that live at all (earning the nickname "Unleashed in the Studio"). "This



rumor came out initially because . . . why there was work done on it was because when Rob did it, he was sick; he had a cold. And we really had to give the vocals a little bit of attention, which is unusual, because Rob has a great voice. But he sung that show and he really had the flu. So he did a little bit of work, not a lot, on the vocal side of it. And we touched a couple of guitars up, but very, very little. And this rumor came out that it had been redone in the studio. But if you listen to it, you can tell it wasn't. It really caught Priest as they were, as they played in Japan in '78. All in all, it was a great live album, and a very honest live album. Some people strip everything off and then put it back on again. We wouldn't do that. But there will always be rumors."

To be fair, ardent Priest fans have compared the recording with a bootleg of the February 15th show and found it to be quite similar to the finished album. However Rob had been spotted back at Startling Studios out on the patio, with headphones on, singing away, and the rumors caught fire from there. Issue has even been taken with the crowd noise, but again, a comparison with the bootleg shows a similar idiosyncratic Japanese crowd sound.

The cover art, however, was indeed done back home. It bears the handiwork of top snapper Fin Costello, who is said to have conducted the session at Dunstable Civic Hall in front of a bunch of old age pensioners playing bingo! An interesting wrinkle is that Les Binks isn't pictured. This was because at the time of the shoot, he had already been ousted from the band. Notes Ian, "He was a fine drummer, Les.

But I don't know, I think he had run his course. I think he was a little bit tired with it, all the road work we did. He'd had enough I think [laughs]. He'd moved on." That's the polite face on it, but another reason for the split — and only a shade stronger — is that Les wasn't all that powerful live. A studied listen to *Unleashed in the East* doesn't proffer any indication of this, and if Binks does indeed lack power or groove, he certainly makes up for it in matching the band's sense of flair, whack for whack. Sure, there's that bizarre lost-my-mind disco beat in "Starbreaker" (which isn't even part of the original album), but other than that, Les is a huge part of *Unleashed*'s wow and prowess. Other reasons floated over the years for Les' departure include a mysterious eye injury, the thought that his style was upstaging the rest of the band and finally, demands for more pay.

Still, the party line ossifies in the minds of those who were there, such as Glenn: "Les was a fantastic drummer, you know. If I had to criticize Les, I think technically he was capable of playing anything. And he stepped into the situation and filled the gap admirably. But he didn't

HE WAS A VEGETARIAN. . . THAT MAYBE DIDN'T RING TOO WELL IN THE PRIEST CAMP. WE'RE BIG MEAT EATERS HERE.

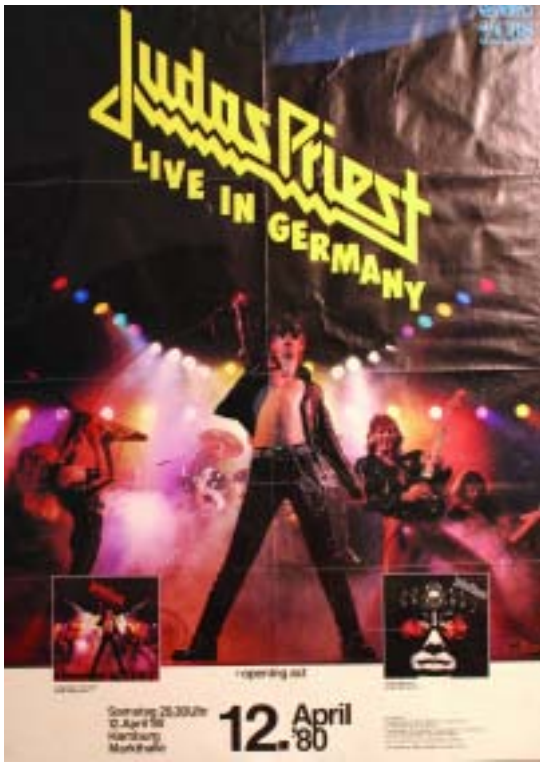
Edmund Varuolo/2droogies.com

quite lay it down enough on stage. It was in time and it was note-perfect, but there was . . . I think for what Priest needed, just a slight lack of physical energy there. And I think that is eventually why we parted company. But funnily enough, I met someone the other day who knew Les, and none of us can really identify the moment when Les left, or when he didn't leave. You know, there is a strong possibility that Les could still be with us, because none of us is really sure when we parted company. He was a vegetarian, too, and that maybe didn't ring too well in the Priest camp [laughs]. We're big meat eaters here."

Adds Halford, "Les' involvement came about off the back of the work that Simon Phillips did for us on the *Sin After Sin* album. Simon Phillips is a very technical, very inventive drummer. And the two previous drummers we worked with, John Hinch and

SOME PEOPLE STRIP EVERYTHING OFF AND THEN PUT IT BACK ON AGAIN. WE WOULDN'T DO THAT. BUT THERE WILL ALWAYS BE RUMORS.

Alan Moore, were very kind of straight down the road, very economic, simple, tasteful drummers. And I think the reason we got so excited about using somebody out of the Simon Phillips style of drumming was that we could just see again, at least at that time from the writing point of view, the advantage of having a drummer that could be very flamboyant and busy and hitting a lot of things, that kind of approach. So Les was with us for two albums, *Stained Class* and *Killing Machine*. After we had been through those two writing modes, and we eventually had the experience and hooked up with Tom Allom, the band was suddenly writing in this *British Steel* format. There was just this feeling that we wanted to get back, if you will, to that very simple, steady, solid, almost Bonham-esque style of drumming. And we found all of those things we needed in Dave Holland."



BRITISH STEEL

(CBS, April '80)

Side 1

Rapid Fire
Metal Gods
Breaking the Law
Grinder
United

Side 2

You Don't Have to be Old to be Wise
Living After Midnight
The Rage
Steeler

8

"THE ROBOT SCYTHES AND THE LASER-BEAMING HEARTS AND THE MOLTEN BREATH"

– British Steel

With the exclamation point of the live album out of the way, Priest set about making new inroads into accessibility. Finances were dire, despite the triumphant signals the front cover of *Unleashed in the East* might insistently emit (still *Unleashed*'s sales were said to have doubled those of *Hell Bent for Leather*). Reaching back one studio album, *Hell Bent for Leather* might conceivably be viewed as a first step toward some far-off songfulness that would finally garner the band some sales, but it would be the band's fateful association with producer Tom Allom that would unlock a box filled with the psyches of a headbanging army of fans latent for years and now ready to burst with pride. Indeed Allom had just recorded Def Leppard's competent and youthful *On Through the Night* debut at the same homey home studio he was taking Priest into, so the vibe was there to take Priest commercial.

Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

"I think it was one of the simplest records that we made," says Halford of *British Steel*, understating the fact by a multitude of multiples. "At that point we were all on the same page; we were all thinking in the same way. Because that album is literally written from scratch. So it wasn't a case like, where in some of the other instances, we would sit at home with our tape recorders and come in together and throw our ideas on the table. With *British Steel*, we really wrote that together. That was the first time that me and Ken and Glenn wrote as a trio, as opposed to in pairs. And when we saw how successful that was, and how much fun we were having doing that, we decided from that point on to write as a trio. But the friction still existed in that healthy competitive manner. Ken and Glenn both had — and still have — two very different styles of guitar playing. So it was just a question of give and take, really. I mean, I can only speak as an observer. I would never put words into their mouths, but just from what I experienced, there was just this constant type of situation of essentially wanting to do the best things, but having that kind of healthy, robust competitive

edge in what one would present to the other and back and forth [laughs]. It was like a tennis match, volleying riffs at each other."

As for Tom Allom's production job, *British Steel* indeed taking a mere four weeks to record, Rob explains that "as far as the end result is concerned, you are responsible for the final things that come out of the speakers as much as the producer. Because at the end of the day you kind of nod your head and give it the green light and say, 'That's good; let's move on to the next track.' But I mean, producers have their own style and way of capturing the sound. That's why we were so thrilled to work with Tom. He suddenly came along and captured all of the dimensions that we felt were right for the sound we were creating, and that's why we had such a long experience with him."

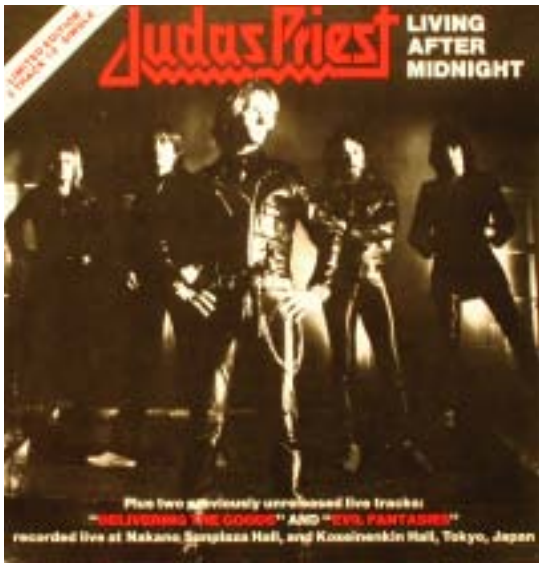
Rob has also said that the sound of the album has an almost stainless-steel quality about it, and that the album was to the point, sharp and direct. Tom Allom further claimed that the album's lively sound (really?) came from the fact that he and the band quickly decided that the confines of the studio itself wouldn't work. On a search for sounds, they fanned out, recording in various rooms of the manse, with the expansive marble-floored hallway becoming key for the drum sound, hanging ambient mics and all.

Comments K.K. on Tom and his methods, "He would rearrange the songs. Tom was the type of producer who would, if he particularly could, make a song simpler and punchier and to the point — he was more that way inclined. We only had about six weeks to record the album, so that was conducive to getting the job done. And yes, sound-wise, we actually recorded the drums in the staircase, as you would, really, to get the best ambience and room sound. It was kind of weird really, because I was in the library, I think Glenn was in the dining room, Dave was in the staircase. We were all split up in these different rooms for separation. But I really liked it in the library, because it had a wooden floor, which is fantastic for guitar playing, any room with plenty of wood. So you get these really nice warm real sounds. It's kind of weird, you've got your headphones on and you can hear everybody talking, but you're spread out all over the house."

WHEN WE SAW HOW SUCCESSFUL THAT WAS, AND HOW MUCH FUN WE WERE HAVING DOING THAT, WE DECIDED FROM THAT POINT ON TO WRITE AS A TRIO.

Unsurprisingly then, the guitars sounded good, even great. Even if there's a certain lack of warmth from the drums, and maybe not enough bass on *British Steel*, to be fair, Tom Allom's idea was to get the guitars up front and prominent. Another key hard rock producer of the era, Tom Werman, acted in much the same way, diminishing, arguably intentionally, thump and thunder for the electricity of a supercharged guitar (or two or three or five). To that end, as they suggested, both K.K. and Glenn record in large rooms for what they considered a live or raw sound, with close mic-ing as well as mics placed 20-odd feet away. K.K. joked that he spent the whole month in the

WE'VE NEVER SET OUT TO DO A SINGLE. WE JUST GOT ON WITH IT AND PLAYED WHAT WE FELT.

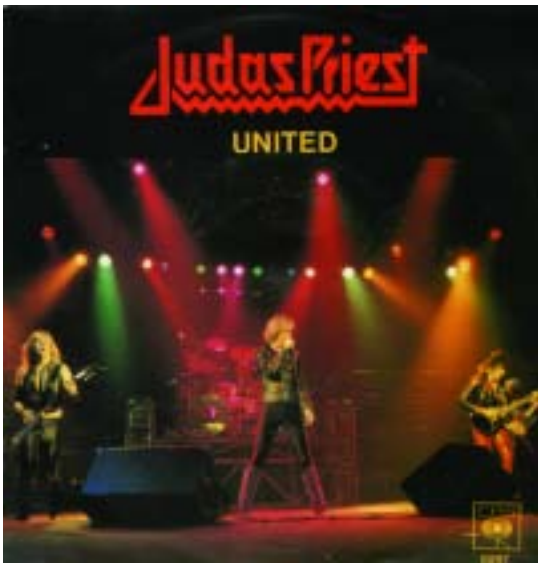


library, and not with any good books to read either. Only "poor Ian" was in the actual studio.

"Tom was just a bundle of fun," adds Ian, "and he was a great producer. We had a great time with him, mainly in bars [laughs]. No practical jokes. I don't think anybody pulled anybody's leg, really. Apart from, I don't know, not spiking your drink, but putting ketchup or something in your Bloody Mary." Additional hijinks included fishing in Ringo's swimming pool and riding motorcycles around his garden.

But, says Ian, neither Tom, nor new straight-eight drummer Dave Holland, nor anybody at Columbia, had been the major factor behind *British Steel*'s stark simplicity versus previous records. "There have been very few extra forces. Obviously Ken and Rob and Glenn write most of the songs, but it's all very straight out of their heads rather than being pushed into it one way or another via anybody. The only influence we've ever had is when somebody else would suggest doing a cover version, and then it's been left up to us which one to do and what we do with it. And the commercial tracks . . . like I say, they weren't consciously recorded as commercial tracks — they were album tracks. We've never set out to do a single. We just got on with it and played what we felt. And like I say, we left that up to the record company. If there was a commercial track on there, they would obviously put it out as a single. *British Steel* was a bit of a landmark. It was the first album that we headlined in the States. We had opened for different bands and special-guested until that point, with the net result that up until then, it was the most popular album, the biggest seller. And in fact I think it outsold *Point of Entry*. It was an important album but again, just a progression from *Hell Bent*."

"*British Steel* was an album that we actually wrote a lot of in the studio," recalls Glenn. "We did it in a very short amount of time, went into Tittenhurst Park, which was Ringo's house, and I think we wrote probably about 40 percent of that when we were in the studio. We don't normally do that, but it did work out really well because *British Steel* was a classic album." The studio was available because Ringo had ended up moving to France, due to the crazy British income tax laws that turned many rock stars into "tax exiles." Rather than letting it sit empty, he decided to rent it out as a working studio.



British Steel was classic, yes, but decidedly commercial compared to all that came before. At the time of its birth to the public, it was actually a sharp shock to the party faithful — considerably less note-dense, all the bitty parts gone, no flash drumming on display, lyrics teenaged, hot and bothered.

The biggest shock came with advance single "Living After Midnight," unleashed on the public in March of 1980, one month before the album proper. Like a stinging slap in the face, this modest anthem emerged from radios the world over with bravado, yes, but framed as little more than a Kiss song. Band lore has it that Tipton had been working on the riff through the wee hours (two or three Marshall stacks are mentioned — could it be anything but?) while Rob slept away in the bedroom directly above the studio, only to emerge in the morning worse for wear, but with a lyric that came to him in his sleep.

"We were expected to do a commercial track," says Hill, dangerously close to contradicting earlier statements. "And Rob had this great lyric, 'living after midnight.' And it just fell into place. It was one of those things. It was one of those tracks that was worked on with an eye to being commercial and radio-friendly, and it turned out to be a very popular track. It's still in the set today [laughs]. That's one of the tracks you can't drop. People will go to the live show expecting to hear that, and if you don't play it, they'll walk away disappointed."

The song is indeed an anthem, and back in 1980 was a smash hit, the calling card that was presented to prospective buyers of this new version of Priest, a band for the '80s. It was indeed the happiest song the band had written to date, and who can fault making people happy? It also had a catchy, very simple groove, one that wouldn't be out of place at an AC/DC show. Glenn and K.K. fully admit that the song is less sophisticated than much of their material, but that it's a blast to play live, which translates over to the audience. It excites on other levels as well. The end result — success in America — was an intoxicant. The guys just loved how they could hear the song playing on

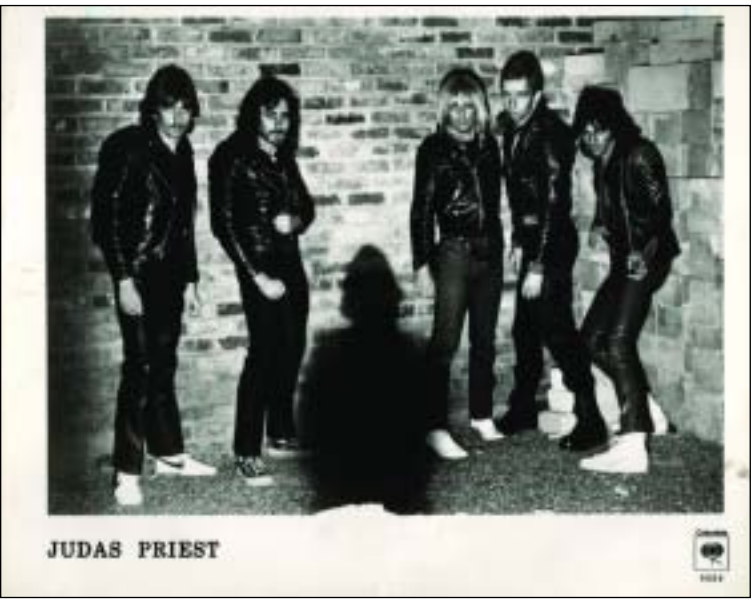
Can you take 12 inches of "British Steel"?
Priest
BRITISH STEEL
"British Steel" — the metal monster you've been waiting for from Judas Priest. Including the songs "Living After Midnight", "Metal Gods" and "Breaking the Law". "British Steel". The Priest takes rock 'n' roll to the hilt — and then some.
Judas Priest. "British Steel". On Columbia Records and Tapes.

stereos and on radios across the expanse overseas, and how, subtly, the sentiment of the song was more of an American thing than British — this idea of being relentless, being possessed by a determination to have a good time and in the process, going all night long, then disappearing like a Wild West hero. As K.K. is wont to say, "Who says you can't sing along to the Priest?"

Invited to headbang with abandon, one almost forgets certain aspects of the song's construction, namely that the verse riff is pretty heavy, and that in actuality, it starts with the chorus, rather than the verse. Also, the song is opened by the band's new drummer, Dave Holland, alone, a man who would become the lightning rod in the band concerning this issue of paring down, or at the negative end, dumbing down.

Looking back, after years of conditioning from drum tornado Scott Travis, Glenn comments that "Dave is a very solid drummer, but he never had the ability to operate fast kick-pedal patterns, which, you know, we did suffer from, there's no doubt about that. But when it came to laying down tracks like 'Living After Midnight,' he was a very solid drummer."

Holland had joined Priest in August of 1979 at the age of 31. Citing Johnny Kidd & The Pirates and jazz as early influences, Holland started on piano but got his first drum set



when he was ten years old. Debuting with a psychedelic band called Pinkerton's Assorted Colours, Holland's main pre-Priest gig was with Glenn Hughes in Trapeze, for which he recorded all of the original studio albums plus later live material. On the side, he guested for Justin Hayward, Glenn Hughes, and in the middle of his Priest run, Robin George.

"We auditioned drummers for Trapeze," begins Glenn Hughes, asked to assess Holland as a drummer. "We were called Finders Keepers before, and Dave was in that band with the ridiculous name — it was a pop band, and they had a big hit in England. Dave is an amazingly good orchestrated arranging drummer. He's really funky, unlike what you would imagine for Judas Priest, which is a really great band. But in Trapeze he was a really great arranger of great songs. In Priest, you know, I think Glenn Tipton ran that band on the musical side. Rob obviously was very in control of the vocals. But the music is run by Glenn Tipton. In Trapeze, Dave was a great drummer. I think for Priest, he wasn't. I mean, I think on a couple of tracks he was, but he's certainly greater on the Trapeze stuff. I mean, Dave spoke to me many times about . . . I think he had a lot to do with the arrangements of some of the songs for Judas Priest. Dave is really good at that."

"Dave was always a good drummer, adds Trapeze lyricist Tom Galley. "Strange style — he just belted. But if you've ever watched him, you were always wondering whether he was

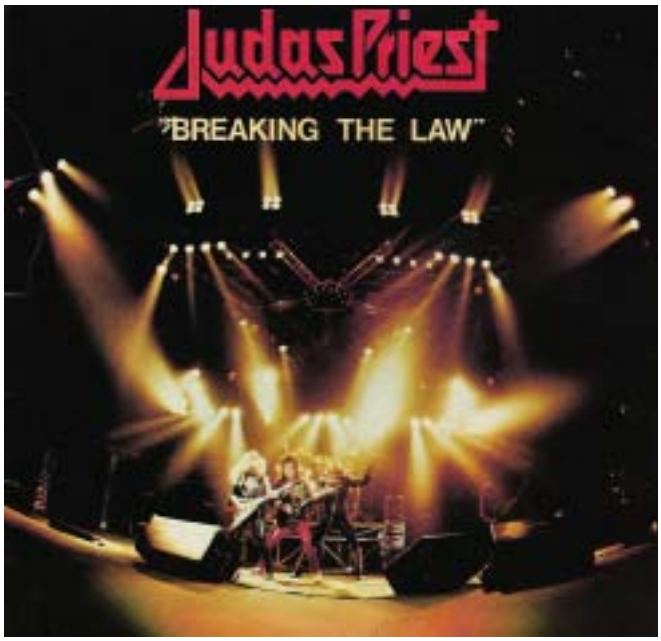
THAT WAS US DROPPING A CUTLERY TRAY, PLUS THERE WAS A GOLF CLUB MAKING SWISHING NOISES, BANGING OF RADIATORS, AND DROPPING BOTTLES.

going to come out of the roll sometimes, because he's got a strange technique. But whatever he was, live he was great, recording he was very good."

Again, whether it was Holland's dead-plain drumming or a host of other signals, *British Steel* was simply all right there, plain for all to see. Even a speed metaller like "Rapid Fire" is drummed stripped-down and old school, in lockstep with the song's smeary, almost dreary riffing. The production agrees — Holland's drums are dry, and there is a dearth of bass. Only Halford is exerting himself, spitting out his words like a drill sergeant, having a ball with what he calls his Olivier moment, being Shakespearean, being a Brummie, even going so far as to make up a word, "desolisating." However, the break section is infinitely guitary, with K.K. and Glenn turning in one of their patented shredding trade-off solos, separated geometrically by Rob's vocal. According to plan, the song does stick to the memory circuits, aided by Rob's flash lyric that marries his old sci-fi themes to characteristics of heavy metal.

"Metal Gods" is another song that demonstrates the directness of the new Priest, but with solid success. Holland's two-fisted high-hat beat supports handily an instantly memorable riff, which turns dark and increasingly heavy for the song's sturdy pre-chorus. Halford again is thespian, fully convincing, yet the song closes with an extended musical passage o'er which the metal gods themselves do battle. Says Ian of the clashing sword effect, "That was us dropping a cutlery tray, plus there was a golf club making swishing noises, banging of radiators, and dropping bottles, which was in 'Breaking the Law.' All sorts of stuff went on there. It was the dawning of production pieces."

"Breaking the Law" was in fact spruced up by the boys dropping some of Ringo's beer and milk bottles out back on the patio. The siren in the same track is produced entirely by K.K. on his guitar, through bends on his Strat. Rob was particularly pleased with the outcome of this sequence, which, he says, tells the story with sound, adding that he likes to do much the same with his lyrics, paint a little picture that leaps to another medium, such as the movies.

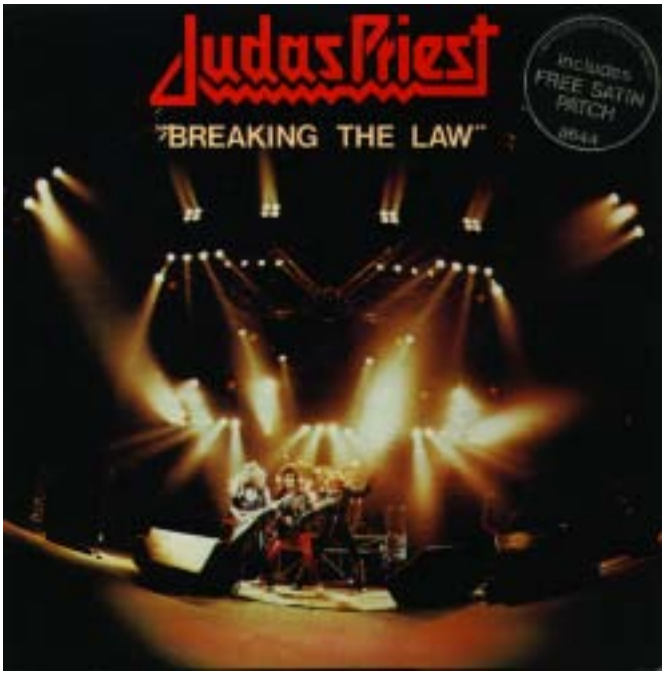


BREAKING THE LAW
As recorded by JUDAS PRIEST
Words and Music by
Glenn Tipton, Robert Halford
& Kenneth Downing

The thunder at the beginning of "Metal Gods" was nothing more than the slamming of a heavy door, magically transformed into something more epic in the studio. The swishing noise on the song was obtained by Rob swinging a pool cue quickly, with Allom twiddling a few knobs — essentially increasing the compression — to get it up to a heroic, godlike level. A whip effect proved problematic for one of Rob's own whips, so a guitar cable was used instead, hit against a flight case.

The main effect in "Metal Gods" though, is the repeated clashing sword sound, which, as Ian has indicated, comes from trays of cutlery. Tom Allom has in fact explained that it was obtained by multi-tracking ten or 12 times, the dropping of the cutlery tray on the stone floor in Ringo's kitchen, courtesy of himself and Rob. Added in are some mic-stand spikes to the floor with the base removed.

"If there was ever a great song in metal and if there was ever a metal anthem, it would have to always be 'Metal Gods,'" says Rob, in his amusingly verbose, circular manner of speaking. "Talking about the robot scythes and the laser-beaming hearts and the molten breath, it's a great caricature for metal. It's almost like an animation idea put under cover of a piece of metal music. And when everyone sings along with that song, I think they feel that they are a metal god, too. It's just a great song that connects with people on an emotional metal level."



One must suppose that Rob's love for the song also derives from the fact that he quickly became known as The Metal God, just as Glenn Hughes is called The Voice of Rock, or Bruce Dickinson is deemed The Air Raid Siren. Furthermore, Rob has talked about the song being influenced by old horror movies, in particular *Day of the Triffids*, and monsters like the Kraken. The idea was to imitate one of these big robots stomping around, which is underscored by Rob's robot walk onstage during the song, that amusing bit of choreography tied to the song's instrumental close that's always been a highlight of any Priest concert.

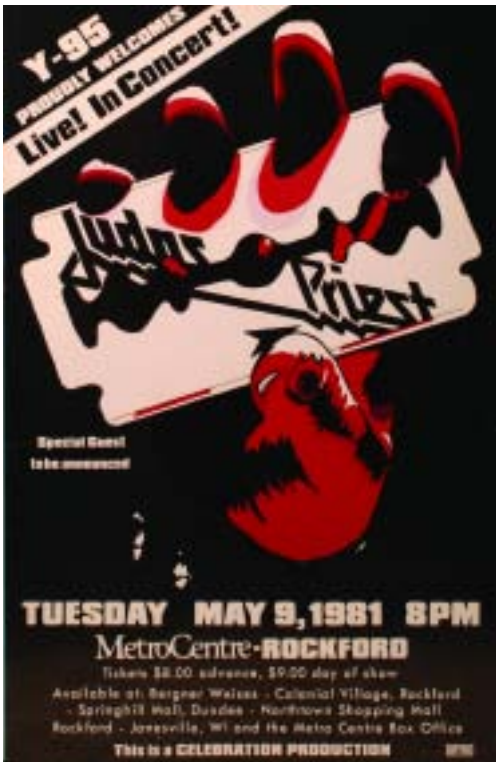
If "Living After Midnight" was to be *British Steel*'s fey calling card, it was "Breaking the Law" which would emerge as the album's biggest hit, its full-on anthem perhaps the band's perennial key piece of magic up there on the live stage. Backed with "Metal Gods," and served in a limited gatefold sleeve with arch-NWOBHM patch, the song vaulted to #12 on the U.K. charts. Its tale of alienated youth fit perfectly with post-punk Britain, the nation having seen all too many years of economic recession. Rob stresses the track's universal relevance, that it is a song about being promised that all these things will come through working hard, finishing school and whatnot, and then finding that success isn't achievable — so you break the law.

A campy, lighthearted video for the track courtesy of Sex Pistols documenter Julien Temple — and with Rob looking like a natty Joe Jackson — helped underscore the punk verve of the new Priest. This element was wisely not emphasized, but nonetheless brought up, *Rolling Stone* comparing the band (or at least the energy of the band) to the Ramones and the Damned.

The album cover also offered a bit of punk in the form of a razor blade, although frankly few Priest fans made that connection at the time. Recalls Hill, "I think the cover that attracted the most discussion was *British Steel* and the razor blade, only because it was a symbol of the punk movement at the time, which we obviously weren't a part of. And obviously it's turned out to be one of the classic Priest covers, instantly recognizable. But there was some concern about that, that maybe people would think we turned to punk."

The *British Steel* cover was the work of CBS artist Roslav Szaybo, returning to heavy duty after his iconic image for *Killing Machine*. Along the lines of the band name Metallica and

Edmund Varuolo/2droogies.com


Y-95
PROUDLY WELCOMES
Live! In Concert!
Judas Priest
Special Guest
to be announced
TUESDAY MAY 9, 1981 8PM
MetroCentre-ROCKFORD
Tickets $8.00 advance, $9.00 day of show
Available at Bergner Weiss - Colonial Village, Rockford
- Springhill Mall, Dundee - Northtown Shopping Mall
Rockford - Janesville, WI and the Metro Centre Box Office
This is a CELEBRATION PRODUCTION

Venom's *Black Metal* title for their second album, *British Steel* presumed a sort of last-word-in-heavy-metal status for Priest. But it was also the name of a steel company from the Midlands, one in fact, that had employed a Mr. Glenn Tipton for five years, Tipton recalling his years there as drudgery in a grey, dour setting not unlike something out of the industrial revolution. Credit for the name goes to Ian Hill, who says that the steel workers were on strike at the time and he was seeing the name *British Steel* everywhere. Rob pushed the overall concept along by noticing the name Sheffield Steel on some razor blades that he had.

Besides the aforementioned punk connection, additional controversy came in the idea that the razor blade on the cover was actually cutting into the hand. The imagery was toned down, and rendered without blood (or at least in shadow), to the deft point where one could see it both ways — as a hand merely holding the blade, or the blade beginning to slice into the fingers. A subtle point made by the band in various interviews was that a bonus implication was that, given the lack of blood, it was safe to be into this kind of music.

"Breaking the Law" would be instrumental in pushing *British Steel* gold, the band's first "record of metal," hitting that plateau within two years of its release, with official platinum designation not to come until 1989. Of note, the song's prominence was recognized early: it was the opening track on the original vinyl issue of the album, but "Rapid Fire" gets the

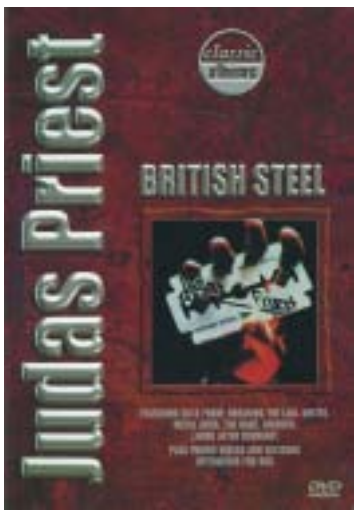
Chris Walter/Photofeatures

pole position on later reissues. The album rose to #4 on the British charts and #34 on Billboard, Priest finally finding a spot of success on which to hang their hats. And "Breaking the Law" was the soundtrack to that success, its slightly mournful, poignant melody, its pulsation and verve, and its various sections — the next always raising the stakes — combining with the band's new plainspeak attitude to form what is arguably Priest's first highway song. Again, the widely seen video reinforces this road song aspect, with the band singing along while driving to make a heist at Barclay's bank, packing guitars instead of guns, going after gold records instead of money. The overall effect is indeed a sing-along, with producer Allom even going so far as to say that the song has a pop groove to it.

"'Breaking the Law' is just one of the great metal songs of all rock 'n' roll," muses Rob. "It will be as strong as it was when it was created in '80, '81, and here we are 20 years later playing that song at *Rock in Rio*, and all the people are singing it word for word. And it just says everything about what rock 'n' roll represents. It's a real high energy, anarchic, gang-type number. It just brings everybody together because of what it talks about, namely that we go through our early stages in life and we feel that we are being made a lot of promises, and then when those promises are broken, we react, and that's something I think everyone can relate to. It's a fun song, too. It has a serious tone but it's a great, fun song to experience and I'm aware that when I play that song around the world it gets an incredible reaction."

"Grinder" is another classic of heavy metal economy, with the band strutting along to an insanely catchy back rhythm from Hill and Holland, the lyric almost a continuation of the character sketch plotted in "Breaking the Law," that of a young male cranked full of hormones and ready to make his mark on the world. Halford again growls menacingly, finding new dimension and confidence in his multi-varied voice. Twisted Sister's Dee Snider was one of many metal legends on which Halford was to make an impression, Snider perceptive in noticing Rob's rough side as well as the obvious and penultimate soar above his roar: "Halford is a great singer, but I don't know if vocal styling-wise, he was someone I really emulated. The one thing I definitely learned . . . I came from that era where high singing was what people wanted to do; people wanted a high singer. I got into Twisted Sister auditioning on Led Zeppelin stuff. The more you sang high, the better it was. I think Halford actually started that way too, but he came to realize he was more effective by staying low, and then kicking it up, for accenting. As opposed to 'Exciter,' which is all high, and it just wears on you, I looked at something like 'Grinder,' and I went, ah, I get this — he's seasoning with his high voice, and it's more effective, so I really learned that from Rob."

Reminiscing about hearing Priest for the first time, Dee mentions "Grinder" again, noting its effect on where the Twisted sound



Edmund Varuolo/2droogies.com

was to originate. "It was probably 'Exciter' that I had heard in a club, back in like '78, '79, New Jersey. And I thought, 'What the fuck is that?!' My God! We used to play that as our opening track, our intro track for years, just because, man, it's one of the most intense songs. 'Fast as a Shark' is another one, 'Kill the King' by Rainbow — I should make a list. So I started to nose around, and it wasn't the one with 'Exciter' I bought, but it was *Hell Bent for Leather*, with that album cover. That record, with the shattered goggles and the blood — that record was just staggering. At that point I really started to study them as a prototype of a two-guitar band. Twisted Sister was a two guitar band; there were two guitars joined, and I don't think we had a role model per se, but when Priest came along, we started to define how the two guitars would be used. You know, not playing two separate guitar parts like Aerosmith or whatever, or Guns, which was later, but playing unified guitar parts, doubling each other, for the intensity, the effect of it. The perfect example is 'Grinder' — all of a sudden the second guitar comes in, just as strength. So that really helped define Twisted — the way Priest approached two guitars."

Glenn's "Grinder" solo is particularly tuneful, Rob commenting that many of Tipton's patterns are near to a vocal, or a singer's pattern. As a result, says Glenn, the solos become an integral part of the song forever, and for the most part, can't be altered in a live setting, given that punters will be expecting to sing it in their heads, and in many cases, hammer out a bit of air guitar to reinforce the effect.

"United" saw the band doing *Top of the Pops* again, and it's an endearing video that emerges, one that captures the ground floor excitement

of the NWOBHM, here applied to — and in homage to — one of the bands that built the house, volunteering their services in a sense, given the lack of pay Priest had had to endure for well on a decade at this point. Tom Allom called this one the record's anthem. Even though "United" emulated the trudge (and drudge) of "Take on the World" and "We Will Rock You," Priest this time were smart enough to place prominent guitar signposts along the muddy path of the march. "It speaks for itself, really, 'United,'" says Ian. "Stand together, the camaraderie and all the rest of it. It was a good source for a single because of the lyric content. So the record company thought it might have been a good idea to put it out." Backed with "Grinder," "United" rose to #26 in the U.K. charts, adding further steam to *British Steel*'s ascendance, the single issued on cue four months after the release of the album proper.

"Don't Have to be Old to be Wise" (the "You" was added for later reissues) parties it up very much like "Living After Midnight," both tracks in essence anticipating the first wave of hair metal to hit in '83, a couple years past the launch of MTV. Again, Rob plays the role of a jean-jacketed headbanger misunderstood and ready to grab the reins of his own life. Rob sells the argument effortlessly, while the band plods along with a happy, humpy set of chords. Grudgingly, old fans took to it, and new fans showed up in droves, pumping their fists along with this new everyman's version of Priest.

Ian Hill goes reggae for the fleeting and inconsequential opening sequence witnessed

on "The Rage," an underrated epic rocker, one of the little-discussed tracks on *British Steel*. Halford delivers an enigmatic lyric about some sort of huge conflict, while the band Sabbath-stomps toward . . . one more round of reggae. "The Rage" was one of the last things whipped up for the album, and the band definitely welcomed its sense of adventure, the guys all joking that the lyrics were definitely grand, even if no one — Rob included — knows what they're about. K.K.'s solo is a bit of anomaly for him, Downing calling it bluesy and emotional, not his usual wild style. Glenn has called "The Rage" one of his favorite Priest tracks of all time, admiring the fact that it employs a key Priest characteristic, this idea of a preceding light passage bestowing upon a riff a greater sense of power through contrast.

A sense of the album "framed" occurs, with "Steeler" bookending "Rapid Fire" for OTT, or "over the top," content on the album, an essential double dose of speed metal, although, as befitting *British Steel*'s safety features, mild speed metal. Still, this one possesses more of a carnal attack than "Rapid Fire," especially given

some of the violent turns later in the track, past the fairly benign root riff, the break signaling a branching out into darker terrain, studded with chopping riffs, wild soloing, and Rob's malevolent barking.

The *British Steel* tour would finally put Priest over the top. Oddly, both "Metal Gods" and "Breaking the Law" wouldn't be part of the party, only getting added to the set list the following year. Even more oddly, "Don't Have to be Old to be Wise" was firmly in there, as was "Steeler," along with the expected "Living After Midnight" and "Grinder."

Rob was sassy in longish blond hair as Priest warmed up at home in March of 1980, leading up to the release of the album with an ambitious young band called Iron Maiden in tow for early tour dates. Other than Rob exposing himself onstage at The Rainbow on April 1, the band being late for a gig yet again due to their

Edmund Varuolo/2droogies.com

Judas Priest

MONSTERS
OF ROCK
Rainbow
Judas Priest
SCORPIONS
APRIL WINE
SAXON
RIOT
T=o=u=c=h
Neal Kaye

TICKETRON
AVALON ATTRACTIONS
BRINGS YOU
JUDAS PRIEST
LONG BEACH ARENA
THU JUN 13 1985

MONSTERS
OF ROCK
Rainbow
Judas Priest
SCORPIONS
APRIL WINE
SAXON
RIOT
T=o=u=c=h
Neal Kaye

"Living After Midnight" *Top of the Pops* filming, and Tipton trashing his equipment at Sheffield Town Hall, the tour went off without a hitch. West Germany and one gig each in France and Belgium were next, but then, in May, it was off to America, where Priest would politely state their case and emphatically stake their claim.

The U.S. tour would feature support from Def Leppard and Scorpions, two bands that went on to sell more records than Priest ever would, something Iron Maiden, U.K. seat-warmers from a couple months back, would manage as well. May and June would find the band making a Texas stand, before taking the show west through June. A festival was logged in St. Louis on June 29th. Called the Grand Slam Super Jam, the bill featured Priest along with Sammy Hagar, April Wine and Shooting Star, none of the four acts all that big at the time, but each with a hopeful pocket of fans — a career, so to speak. Into late July, Priest played a handful of shows with Scorpions, Heart and the drugged and doomed Joe Perry Project supporting its very, very good *Let the Music Do the Talking* debut.

Second-to-last date of the tour, August 16, 1980, was to be a highlight, Judas Priest playing second on the bill to Rainbow on the very first Monsters of Rock festival at Castle Donington. New mates Scorpions and April Wine were along for the ride, as were Saxon and U.S. baby bands Riot and Touch, the latter no doubt there because they shared Bruce Payne management with the headliners. It was a wet and muddy day of new heavy metal, and with Rainbow on the ropes with a less-than-classic lineup, it was Priest that would win the day, hands down.

POINT OF ENTRY

(CBS, February '81)

Side 1

Heading out to the Highway
Don't Go
Hot Rockin'
Turning Circles
Desert Plains

Side 2

Solar Angels
You Say Yes
All the Way
Troubleshooter
On the Run

9

"ROB SET HIS BOOTS ON FIRE"

– Point of Entry

All the rage in the early '80s was having your radar up on whether your heavy metal bands were selling out. And when *Point of Entry* emerged, all melodic and bouncy and demurring from any sort of attack stance, a rapidly expanding new army of punters wrinkled their noses, still not having gotten over how the last Led Zeppelin album we would ever hear was stuffed full of keyboards.

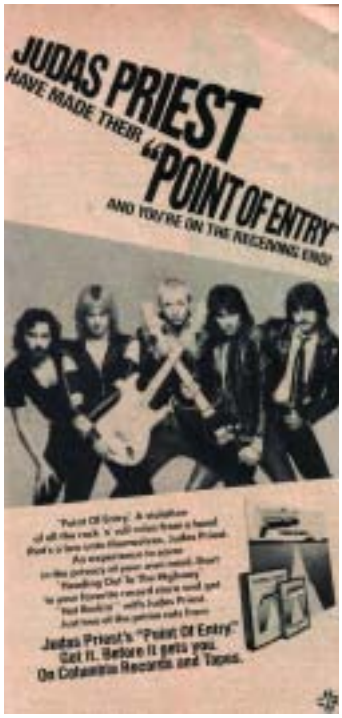
WE SPENT MOST OF THE TIME ON THE BEACH, OR IN NIGHTCLUBS, OR DRIVING MOTORCYCLES THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS. IT WAS GREAT FUN.

So here was Priest waving hello again, the first thing to hit radio being something called "Don't Go," which most certainly alerted ears that something was afoul in the Priest camp, a departure if you like, a point of entry. Indeed, Glenn had said as much, intimating that this new record was an introduction to Priest circa the '80s, a Priest ready to shed their '70s moves.

The sessions, conducted in exotic Ibiza, Spain, were actually fraught with difficulties. The studio was situated way up a long and treacherous driveway that only the band's high-clearance rented Renaults could negotiate without getting beached. The studio was in an old farmhouse, and the owner was having financial problems, so the place kept running out of diesel fuel, which was needed to keep the generator that provided the electricity going. Add to this that water had to be brought in from a well, and you had a charming scene indeed.

Out on the town, the band got into a bit of a brawl in an upscale club with some Germans, prompting the hunting horn/plastic trumpet incident. Glenn picked up this trumpet that was at the club and started playing it, much to the chagrin of the tony patrons. Back on their own turf, horn in their possession, Tom Allom would be fed beer and cigarette butts through it, drink it all down, and continue on with his "When the Saints Go Marching In" refrain.

Asked whether there was pressure to go more commercial with *Point of Entry*, Ian says, "it wasn't so much pressure. We always had artistic license or artistic rights where if we didn't want to do something, we didn't have to. But these people do know their business. If they come to us and say 'Listen, I don't think there's anything on here that's going to get you onto rock radio; how about trying this?' we'll obviously listen and pay attention to that. It was only ever suggestions. That was the first album we recorded in Ibiza. There were lots of distractions, but I don't know about influences [laughs]. We spent most of the time on the beach, or in nightclubs, or driving motorcycles


JUDAS PRIEST
HAVE MADE THEIR "POINT OF ENTRY"
AND YOU'RE ON THE RECEIVING END!
Judas Priest's "Point Of Entry"
Get It. Before It gets you.
On Columbia Records and Tapes.

through the mountains. It was great fun. So maybe that influenced us."

I asked Ian if he would have wanted to be included more in the writing process. "Well, it would be nice, yeah. But the thing is, there was a great team there with Ken and Glenn and Rob, and it worked well. You know what they say: 'Too many cooks spoil the broth' and all that. So I backed off and let them get on with it. There's a great relationship there. They got on with it and I was quite happy with what they were coming up with. I could obviously put my own bass lines to it, and the drummers could put their own beats to it; everybody had their own parts. But those three did a great job and I saw no real reason to intrude on that. We were all getting along really well. We're all comparatively easygoing. There are no prima donnas. The chemistry has been there all the time, with the possible exception of drummers, who keep leaving for some reason. But it's one of the major reasons we've been able to keep it together for so long. If there's an arsehole in the band, sooner or later he's going to cheese somebody off and the band's going to split."

Point of Entry was issued in February of 1981, with different album covers for Europe and North America. Europe got an intriguing and colorful sort of futuristic metal wing over a horizon shot (or is that fire from an aircraft engine?), designed by Roslav Szaybo, who had done all the band's CBS albums to date. North America got the artsy roll of computer paper in the desert scene, designed by Columbia Records' John Berg, who later rose to a vice-president at the label. The back of the North American issue showed — Hipgnosis-styled — a bunch of white cardboard boxes standing at attention. The cover was stickered with a shot of the band, so metalheads would get the point that this austere scene was indeed the cover of a new Judas Priest album.

Priest opened with a song that really told the story of this whole album — even though structures were simple, relaxed, unshowy in the extreme, the writing was fantastic. "Heading out to the Highway" was truly one of those dependable compositions that could conceivably be strummed on a lone acoustic guitar with vocal and still sound good. There's something country-and-western about it, or at least something Wild West. It's a great track, this record's "Breaking the Law," and it's become a lasting Priest anthem.

"Anything we did in Ibiza was difficult," laughs Tipton, asked about the album. "Technically, it was because of the amount of alcohol that was consumed. And we did have to finish one off in America, where we got sane for a little bit. *Point of Entry* was done there. *Screaming* was started there, and *Defenders* was started there, and then we had to go to a sensible country to finish them."

"You know, we never contrive a song," offers Glenn, with respect to "Heading out to the Highway." "We just sit down and write, and they come from us. And there's never a reason why we wrote a particular song. We sit down, somebody's got a riff, and we kick it around and put a vocal to it, it's all very natural. And that song is still a very perennial live song. But

I honestly like all the Priest stuff. I think the album that most people would point out as being the most different is *Point of Entry*. But then again, you've got tracks like 'Hot Rockin',' 'Desert Plains,' 'Solar Angels' . . ."

Indeed, the band had written a bunch of songs back in London for the new album, but then decided to scrap the whole lot and start new — it was deemed that the songs were good, but not much different in tone than what was on *British Steel*. Priest were again restless to make a very different album — commendable, given the long-awaited breakthrough success they had with *British Steel*.

Label folks noticed "Heading out to the Highway" had a personable, soulful, wistful quality and issued it as a single two months after the album's release, but the song failed to chart either side of the pond. The video for the song was an endearing clip. Dave looks tidy and new wave–like in his skinny tie and dress shirt under leather jacket. Rob could pass for an old punk. This was really the band at its most charming. Marketing hadn't avalanched in on the look. It was thrown together, it was real, the guys were innocent. Interspersed are

IF THERE'S AN ARSEHOLE IN THE BAND, SOONER OR LATER HE'S GOING TO CHEESE SOMEBODY OFF AND THE BAND'S GOING TO SPLIT.

TECHNICALLY, IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL THAT WAS CONSUMED

scenes from a good old-fashioned drag race, '50s style (filmed at an old Royal Air Force strip), Rob in jeans and T-shirt, his moves still a bit feminine and actorly, again, not so studied — Rob later quipped that the band had a Marlon Brando thing going. This is a great video, and the song's stirring melodies provide the perfect soundtrack to the action.

The aforementioned "Don't Go" came next, and I remember friends who were fans being shocked at how it was barely there. Still, it grows on you, and little musical events lift it along as the band progresses through to a conclusion much louder and more robust than the way the track began. The video is another charmer, set to a surreal scene typical of the very first videos, as video directors stretched their creativity as far as they could without spending too much money. Rob has longish blond hair and a moustache as he exhorts various band members not to leave, not to open that white door and enter a crazy world.

"It's more grueling than you think," says Ian with respect to making these clips. "You tend to be sitting around for ages doing nothing, punctuated by a few minutes of intense activity. On the 'Don't Go' video, I remember Rob throwing up into his space helmet one time [laughs]. He does this flying thing in a space suit and he's up on wires and they're spinning him around and all this business and

he actually threw up in the helmet [laughs]. That was quite an event. But I quite liked 'Don't Go.' I liked working on it as well. It was one of the first times we worked with Julien Temple, who went on to bigger and better things, I believe. That was quite exciting. We were generally on location, so the chances of meeting any movie star would be quite remote. 'Don't Go' was done in London. It's usually just generally locally where we happened to be."

Next up was "Hot Rockin'," perhaps the album's heaviest track, this one recalling "Breaking the Law" as well; it's all business and meat-and-potatoes with a metal ride out into a late night of trouble. Almost a punk rocker, there's a great dramatic break late in the track, before an inspiring lapse into another verse. For the video (also directed by Julien Temple), Rob was singing expressively, convincingly, in a car, out for a night on the town, positively raging for a bit of mischief. This footage was interspersed with the band live on a sound-stage, increasingly lighting bits of their gear on fire in front of a small crowd of egregiously committed metalheads. Recalls Ian, "Rob set his boots on fire and he couldn't put it out; he

was putting this jelly stuff on his palm, I think. And he couldn't get his boots off because they were hot. He was running around there until somebody found a fire extinguisher." Indeed, by the time Rob got his long, tight boots off, his toes were apparently half-burnt from the heat.

"Turning Circles" is the record's second shocker, its opening riff sounding like something off a Lou Reed album. Fortunately, the song up-ratchets to what is at least a dark pop rocker, reminiscent of something Blue Öyster Cult might have done that same year. "Desert Plains"

follows, and this one underscores the album's essence as something slightly morose, laid-back, understated. It's a rocker, one that could have fit on *British Steel*, or strangely, *Defenders*, but again, the fireworks are kept in the box. Amusingly, the 2001 reissue of *Point of Entry* includes a crazy-fast live version of the song — the biggest change in tempo of a song, from studio to live, I've ever heard out of any band. The song is wholly transformed in the process.

Side two of the original vinyl opens with another languid but, on the main, heavy rocker, "Solar Angels" helping define the *British Steel*/*Point of Entry* era as built around simple structures, plain but competent recording values, excellent expression from Rob, and a certain pop timelessness. Next was "You Say Yes," which Tipton deems a brave experiment if not a successful one. Again, it's part and parcel of this album's identity. Arrangements are similar throughout the album, and some songs are just happier — this is one of them, its funky, circular riff working well with Rob's flirting lyric. "All the Way" continues in this mainstream mode, sounding like a cross between glam, the Stones and "Living After Midnight." "Troubleshooter" — same thing. This was a Priest pared down and pert, ready to compete perhaps with the world of post-punk new wave.

The album closes with "On the Run," more of a conventional Priest rocker with distinct echoes of *British Steel*'s point-blank rockiness. Still, its status quo strut was a far cry from the note density strafing of a "Hell Bent for Leather" or "Dissident Aggressor."

Commercially, *Point of Entry* would be considered a stumble after *British Steel*'s seemingly effortless vault to gold status. The album peaked at around 425,000 for a while and finally was awarded gold on November 10,

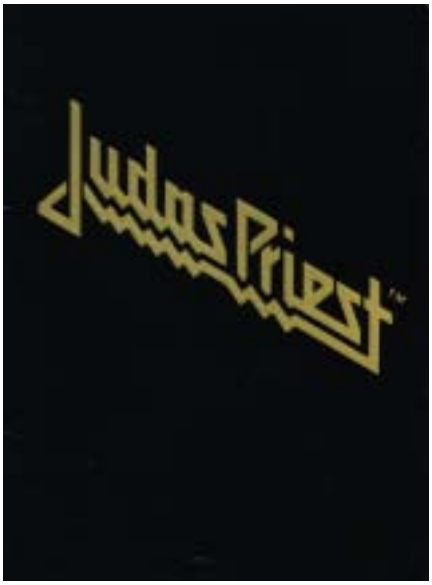
1989. In its day, it would rise to #14 in the U.K. charts, and #39 in the States, compared to #4 in Britain and #34 in the States for its more well-endowed partner, *British Steel*.

Oddly, the band, in retrospect, talks about the album as very strong but perhaps self-indulgent, even progressive. It is, in fact, none of these things. And Priest was the band of record when it came to being self-indulgent and progressive and pulling it off with almost Queen-like flair. This is what they were like during their golden period in the late '70s. But come *Point of Entry*, no, all you had really was simple and poppy — nicely done mind you, but simple and poppy all the same. If writing music pointedly to make some dosh at the expense of purity and creativity was self-indulgent, well then Priest was being self-indulgent.

"We still play 'Heading out to the Highway' live," reflects Ian, looking back at this contentious record. "It's a great live track. We didn't make a conscious effort where we went, 'We'd better try and sell this to the teenyboppers.' There was none of that. It was just that

we went in the studio and did what we did. There was no conscious effort to make the album commercial — it just turned out the way that it did."

Between the record release and touring, Priest parted ways with their business office, Arnakata Management. Amid accusations of financial mismanagement, there was a



difference of vision. Management wanted Priest to ditch the black leather and studs, the whole heavy metal image, along with the Harley. Priest figured this was central to their identity and decided to manage themselves for a time, under the guise of Secret Management Associates Inc.

The *Point of Entry* tour kicked off in mid-February of '81, with Saxon as support. Perhaps cognizant of their slip, the band played the four heaviest metal songs from the album, and nothing else, although "Troubleshooter" was given a test run. Arguably, "On the Run" is the key heavy metal deletion, but other than that, *Point of Entry*'s dark side was covered, through the proprietorship of "Heading out to the Highway," "Hot Rockin'," "Desert Plains" and "Solar Angels." The opener was in fact "Solar Angels," the band hitting the stage after an extended atmospheric intro. The back catalog semi-hits were piling up, with perhaps "Don't Have to be Old to be Wise" being odd-

man-out on a set list starting to firm up for all time. In the U.S., Priest took out a rocketing Iron Maiden, along with a fading Humble Pie, and for the second time, the Joe Perry Project.

The stage set was a step up, with hydraulic platforms, a futuristic star-shaped lighting system and more room to roam — which the band did enthusiastically, aided as well by the use of new wireless guitar systems. A curious red and yellow pattern in front of the amps had Glenn quipping that it looked like a Chinese restaurant. Glenn's black leather jacket and red pants were displayed in all their glory, but Rob looked kind of casual in a denim and leather ensemble. At one show, the lighting system came unhinged on one side and swooped down upon the band, missing them, but taking out a few cymbals in the process.

"Paul Di'Anno apologized personally to me for causing bad air between Maiden and Priest," said K.K., looking back in 2003 at Priest's relationship with the eventual usurpers of the metal throne. "What a great gesture. But he wasn't the main reason for the rivalry. At the time of *British Steel*, Priest was the bigger band and Maiden was the supporting act. They were saying that they'll blow us off the stage without any problem. Well, I thought their behavior wasn't very nice. I'd have loved to send them home and take another band with us who would have appreciated the chance. But we were told not to do it, as it would have looked like we were frightened by them. So we kept on going. But they were very arrogant. And I remember the main rehearsal before the tour, there were a few guys hanging around in the room who didn't say a word and watched everything we did, every step we made and every move of the stage lights. I wasn't very pleased, and asked the guitar tech to tell the guys to leave the place. Don't get me wrong: I'm not 'too good' to play in front of the supporting band — but they could have at least asked if it was OK to attend the rehearsal. We

went on tour and they didn't blow us off the stage, of course. I watched quite a lot of the Maiden shows, but the reaction of the audience wasn't very explosive, because the fans were waiting for us. OK, Maiden became one of the biggest bands of the metal scene, and I'm proud of them. We made a big mistake by focusing more on the U.S. than on Europe after releasing *British Steel*, which means we lost a lot of attention at home. In the U.S., we were quite big — and Maiden asked us for a support slot on our U.S. tour. We said yes — and the same old story happened again. It had a lot to do with rivalry and jealousy. But it's an old story. Like I already said, I'm proud of what Maiden achieved and of what they did for British metal. It might sound stupid, but it's true."

The band was in the States from May of '81 through July, followed by November and December dates in Britain and mainland Europe with Def Leppard and Accept in tow. Curiously, at least early in the campaign, the *British Steel* album cover was being used on tour posters, its distinct image perhaps making a subtle shift from cover for a set of songs to a

descriptor for the upcoming show: Judas Priest — British Steel!

Forever a burr in Priest's saddle, Gull Records returned in '81 with a double album called *Hero, Hero*, which trotted out the old *Rocka Rolla* and *Sad Wings of Destiny* material (already reissued in various territories and in a number of ways), yet again. Cool little changes were part of the package though, the best addition being the early, warmer, more relaxed

version of "Diamonds and Rust." Both are good, sure, but this one is positively cushy compared to the thin and frenetic take that showed up on *Sin After Sin*. Also, through a Rodger Bain remix, "Rocka Rolla" was slightly rearranged, with the harmonica taken out and some soloing lost. "Deep Freeze" was made nastier — finicky things were done to various guitar and vocal parts — and all of those bitty pieces of the *Rocka Rolla* Winter Suite epic were chopped up properly. Finally, Melvyn Grant was called upon to provide the rights to his fantasy warrior painting *Sword of the Gael*, already used for a book cover in 1975. It was one of at least three fetching new fantasy-based paintings Gull would use to tart up the venerable Priest material they kept reconfiguring, and, although they looked good and fit the bill for the band's moody, mysterious first two records, one can't — and shouldn't — erase the iconic *Sad Wings* art from one's mind. *Rocka Rolla* is another story, but ultimately, these things should remain as they were. . . .

SCREAMING FOR VENGEANCE

(CBS, July '82)

Side 1

The Hellion
Electric Eye
Riding on the Wind
Bloodstone
(Take These) Chains
Pain and Pleasure

Side 2

Screaming for Vengeance
You've Got Another Thing Comin'
Fever
Devil's Child

10

"WHEN YOU HIT THAT CONTINENT, IT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOU"

– Screaming for Vengeance

No question, *Point of Entry* knocked Priest down a peg. Fans had it in the back of their minds that even before their heroes got to become ambassadors of metal (a phrase that was thrown around in later years), Priest had stumbled with a weak tea album, leaving the door ajar for lustier romps from the likes of Saxon, Maiden and Def Leppard.

But the band's next album would prove that there was more gas in the tank, that metal still lived and breathed inside this beast from Birmingham. Ibiza, Spain, would again be home to the band as they formulated plans to return strong, with two studios in Florida used for mixing purposes (and the fateful recording of "You've Got Another Thing Comin'"!). *Screaming for Vengeance* would be recorded over a five-month period, from January until May of 1982, the album shipping shortly thereafter, in July. In fact, the band had spent late '81 in Ibiza writing and rehearsing. After they took a break for some U.K. dates in November, they went into recording mode, only to end up scrapping the handful of songs they had worked up the previous October.

Screaming for Vengeance would quickly prove to be a success, hitting gold four months after issue, and platinum six months later. Although likely passing double platinum much earlier, 2001 marked the official designation for the record at that level. It was of little concern that these numbers were not higher than that, nor indeed, as high as the numbers many other metal bands were about to achieve, for Priest would be getting the same high level of press and attendant photography, their crowds would be huge and adoring, and most importantly, they were about to enjoy a few magic years as the gold standard of metal bands. Slow and steady wins the race — the album would spend 53 weeks on the Billboard charts, achieving a #17 placement in the U.S., #11 back home in Britain.

No doubt the artwork chosen for *Screaming for Vengeance* helped the band's commercial prospects. *Point of Entry* was a disaster graphically — nice, a bit arty, intriguing for an album cover, but of little use beyond the world of merchandising. *British Steel* had it all, and frankly, its cartoony feel was a big part of that. Even more cartoony was Doug Johnson's "Hellion," essentially becoming a mascot for the band, even if short-lived. The bold, primary colored graphics surrounding this mythical,

mechanical beast communicated something to the punter, and the fact that the overall design was essentially yellow . . . well, that was something fresh, cheerful, bright, the new color at the party — it was as if Priest was trying to say that yellow was the new black.

Halford had remarked that he had the word "vengeance" firmly in mind for the title. Of course, Halford, as well as the others, would be too polite and also too careful on a publicity tack to suggest the vengeance they desired was toward a) slaggers of their slaggable recent album, or b) the whole idea of metal and maybe even themselves, for screwing up and making that slaggable album. Once Rob had seen the cover image concocted by Johnson, he realized vengeance fit fine, as well as the word screaming, given that Johnson's eagle looked like it was screaming as it swooped in for the kill, as the band's early tourmates Budgie might have surmised. K.K. was further pleased by the fact that the cover brought forward, only slightly, elements from the *Sad Wings of Destiny* art used six years earlier.

Screaming for Vengeance opened with one of the great metal intros of all time. "The Hellion" was 41 seconds of molten metal drama. K.K. has mentioned that the original plan was to turn the track into a song in its own right, which of course never happened. Tom Allom's production proves sizzling, far superior to the humourless knob job afforded *British Steel*, "The Hellion" proceeding proudly like a flawless soundcheck, smiles all around, all systems go. The track, unlike many intros, actually does end, after which "Electric Eye" bursts forth like a thousand hellions from thunderous skies, the song instantly heavier than anything on *Point of Entry*. Again, smiles all around — this time on the faces of the faithful who had to endure their

band's year of red faces at the hands of countless NWOBHM bands handing Priest a beating.

Again, Allom had triumphed at the recording desk. No surprise that the guitars sound bold and searing, but Holland is captured adequately as well. Sure, Allom goes for more of a continuous, high frequency bass rumble, rather than having bass emerge from the kick drum. But the cymbals sizzle loudly and often, and the overall effect is one of potent, profound metal unity.

I'M SURE PEOPLE GET SICK OF HEARING ME SCREAM ABOUT DEMONS AND DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ALL THE TIME.

Notes Rob on the album's first full song, ever to be a live classic: "'Electric Eye' is relevant because it talks about an invasion of privacy by spy satellites, but the cool thing is that I revisited that approach and wrote 'Cyberworld' on the *Resurrection* CD from the Halford band, and it just talks about the way that no matter where we go and what we do in the world, we're always under a microscope, and that there is no such thing as 100 percent privacy in your life." Tipton adds that he admired the way that this was a modern lyric, more sci-fi versus the "dungeon" lyrics of the '70s. Rob's flash words were designed to fit the flash "'80s-style" heavy metal he and K.K. were crafting.

Then again, the lyrics put forth by Rob at the time were a return of sorts from the thoughtful, non-metal themes on the anemic *Point of Entry* album. "I'm sure people get sick of hearing me scream about demons and death and destruction all the time. There's always that tendency in heavy metal to have that kind of stylized writing, because the words usually don't mean a great deal. On *Screaming for Vengeance*, however, the lyrics are back to being aggressive, even more so than on *British Steel*. What I write is based on our audience. The great percentage of our audience is able to relate to the lyrical content. People simply want to relate, and that is probably the greatest thing Judas Priest have had going for us. They see us pretty much as themselves, maybe hoping that one day they can do what we're doing."

"Electric Eye" was indeed eyed as a second lead single to drop from the talons of this record. Halford had reservations about it, figuring something like "(Take These) Chains" was more suited for airplay, but he also recognized the visual appeal in the song's subject matter, and that it undoubtedly would have been good grist for a video. MTV was one year

old and going gangbusters at the time, and Priest was in there like a dirty shirt, garnering huge airplay with *Screaming*'s first single, "You've Got Another Thing Comin'." In any event, "Electric Eye" never happened as a single or video, not that it needed it — it is perhaps eclipsed only by "Victim of Changes" or "Breaking the Law" as the fans' most cherished Priest gem of all time.

"Riding on the Wind" . . . incredibly, this one was also heavier than anything on the last record, and by this point in the sequence, fans were getting the message that Priest was deliberately and brutishly stomping all over their recent past. Lyrically, Halford is tossing off bolts of energy, combining the imagery of the much more poetic and dramatic "Rapid Fire" with the sci-fi of "Stained Class." It ain't much, but it races the pulse. "Bloodstone" completes side one's trilogy of trouncers. What this one lacks in full throttle guitar, it makes up with darkness and a pronounced surge come chorus time. The "Bloodstone" lyric is, again, spare but somewhat poignant, its central and quite grand element being Rob's labeling our corrupt planet a bloodstone.

THAT WAS PLANNED FOR, THAT ONE. IT WAS THE KEY TRACK ON THE ALBUM.

Side one then turns on a disconcerting note, Priest working up a song by hired songwriting gun and Syracuse, New York, native Bob Halligan Jr., later to contribute to the Halford band, his Priest song being his first credit of a long and distinguished career. "(Take These) Chains" is essentially a hair metal song, definitely poppy, balladic at times, lyrically a cheap and cheesy love song. The pre-chorus melody is a highlight though, hearkening back to "Breaking the Law" and poignant bits on *Point of Entry*. The solo section is nicely assembled as well. Still, this wasn't a band that needed help writing. "Pain and Pleasure," another dark horse track, is an apt follow-up to "Chains," both being a bit pedestrian and plodding, working hard to erase all that good will built

up by the three stormbringers placed mercilessly in succession to open the album. It's another love-gone-wrong song, not one of Halford's strong suits.

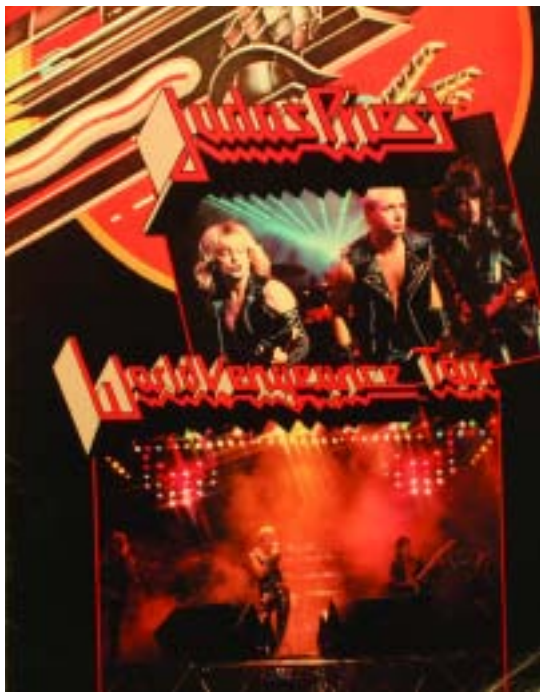
Side two opens with the fourth song on the record heavier than anything on *Point of Entry*, or indeed *British Steel*. *Screaming*'s title track is a return to the technical speed metal mastery found on the song "Hell Bent for Leather" and much of the *Stained Class* album, but from a less naïve and bravely optimistic point of view. Still, without a flash drummer to propel the song, it seems a bit shackled, with no help from Allom's modern attachments to the drum sound. Sure, they are slight, and they pose no problem elsewhere, but on a song this fast, the backbeat feels held back. Halford's lyric is interesting and well off his usual style, almost into an awkward and amusing Ian Gillan "English as a second language" mode. He seems to be on about individuality, essentially a *British Steel* sentiment, but his message emerges more charming than correct.

Says Ian of "Screaming for Vengeance," "It's funny, because that is one of the tracks that Priest will be known for, although also of course, 'You've Got Another Thing Comin',' because it was all over the radio at the time. But 'Screaming' almost epitomizes Judas Priest with the speed and aggression. And that was very, very much worked on. That was planned for, that one. It was the key track on the album." Curiously, Glenn has singled this song out as containing a lead break based on a chord sequence that was composed before the song itself.

Next comes a song even more similar to something from Kiss than "Living After Midnight." "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" again presents Priest to the masses in dumbed-down form. But unlike "Living After Midnight," this one's not even all that good. The cozy charm isn't there, nor is the heavy yet energetic verse. This one thunders along threatening to collapse under its own weight, and the premise is weak. The call and response vocal/riff structure is straight off a Sammy Hagar solo album, the lyric an unimpressive rehash of past themes, the title long, awkward

and boring. As mentioned, there was a well-used video, with Julien Temple again called upon to do the business. And there you go, inexplicable to this writer, "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" was the band's biggest hit ever.

"You always think that with every album!" says Ian, asked whether he had any notion this album would wind up platinum. "We got lucky with it as it contained 'You've Got Another Thing Comin'." That song was very much an accident. We recorded a lot of the material in the Mediterranean. We went to Orlando, Florida, and mixed the album and discovered we were a little short on time. We were mixing down and we thought that we could do with another three or four minutes. We did our best to get something together — a bit of an album filler. That is very unusual for us, because we never take that sort of attitude. It was that song and it was written and recorded within hours. It was an afterthought. It might have been because it was so spontaneous and fresh that



WHEN YOU HIT THAT CONTINENT, IT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOU. YOU'LL HEAR THINGS ON THE RADIO AND YOU'LL BE INFLUENCED BY THIS.

American radio picked up on it and the next thing you know it was being played all over the place. It was the song that broke us in a big way in the States. Everything that followed really owed itself to that song. It is spontaneous things like that that are sometimes the best. How did the success change us? I don't know. You have no basis for comparison. You don't know what you would have been like if you had never gone through it. It was great doing something that you loved, but it was hard. We didn't earn any money for ten years. We were living from hand to mouth for a long time. It was not until *Screaming for Vengeance* that we could afford to go out and buy a decent car! It was a long hard road. Everything that we earned went back into the band. This was the days before renting PAs and trucks. We had roadies we were paying. Like I say, most of the income that came in went back into the band."

"But yes, 'You've Got Another Thing Comin" was very much thrown together in the studio," continues Ian. "Also, the record company was screaming at us for a commercial type song — or something commercial for us — that they might be able to get on radio. And it very much took shape within an afternoon really [laughs]. Although obviously it took a couple of days to get it put down. We got in there, started kicking a few ideas around, and that's what came out. It was very much a last-minute thing." Underscoring the song's quick birth, Dave Holland's first perfunctory run through it, the ghost track, ended up being the one used as the master drum track.

Adds K.K. on the subject of commerciality, "Obviously we started recording in the early '70s. I suppose inevitably when you start to travel the world and go to different countries . . . I mean, before we actually went to America or Canada, people would say, 'When you hit that continent, it's going to change you. You'll hear things on the radio and you'll be influenced by this.' And whether we were or not, I'm not exactly sure. The only thing I know is that it seems that every few years, things take a little bit of a turning in that direction, and you start to create a bit of different rock or metal, as people know. But with *Screaming for Vengeance*, I think that was one album that just

Leif Edling

came out very, very naturally, as did *British Steel*, and we didn't have to work at it. And I think it shows. We say if the record seems to have a good flow to it, good continuity, then the band didn't have to work hard to come up with material. Whereas other albums, I think it kind of shows a little bit. Even though they might be good albums, it shows that we had to work at it. And in actual fact, *Screaming for Vengeance* is our biggest selling album."

K.K. often seemed both bemused and intrigued by what had happened with the band in the States, claiming that the nation's love affair with radio is more intense than elsewhere. To that end, he always got a kick out of hearing his song blasting out of a car rolling by, or even more so, in a supermarket, joking about rolling down the aisle with his cart, in possession of this surreal knowledge that that's him on there.

K.K. adds a comment about song credits — outside of the Bob Halligan Jr. song, everything is credited three ways equally, to Tipton, Halford and Downing. "I think what happens is, there are some songs, obviously, that I present to Rob and Glenn, and vice versa. But there is democracy there. When Glenn puts his stuff on there, it might not be a great amount, but he puts some stuff on there. And Rob puts some stuff on there, and we just credit all of us. And the same thing can happen the other way, where Glenn might present something that is 70 or 80 percent finished, but myself and Rob obviously have our input, and that's the way we work. I

Leif Edling

know what you're saying, really — it would be interesting for people to know who actually kicked off at least the basic essential ingredients, the idea, but that's a close-guarded secret, and maybe forevermore it will be. So for me to say, maybe it wouldn't be fair to the others."

Screaming for Vengeance closes on, well, an uncreative note, with the mellow and Americanized "Fever," essentially another proto–hair band ballad, spruced up by a bit of guitarish nonsense. "Devil's Child" is basically another "You've Got Another Thing Comin'," only a little more sprightly, especially live, where, as with "Desert Plains," Priest makes a decision to kick its ass.

Live, the band skipped the obvious droopers, namely "(Take These) Chains" and "Pain and Pleasure," although "Fever" stumbled its way to the stage, if only for two dates before being retired. And quite a stage it was, the band's most elaborate set ever, the guys having to wait until the day before their first show to test it out. The tour kicked off in late August 1982, supported by the likes of Krokus, The Rods, Def Leppard, Axe, Coney Hatch, Heaven and a rejuvenated Uriah Heep. A low point might have been Dave Holland getting beat up by a cab driver in Dallas, although the high was undoubtedly playing a sold-out show at Madison Square Garden, October 2, 1982. In truth, Holland didn't exactly get beat up. Dave had taken a cab to the gig, requesting to be dropped off in the backstage area. The cabbie refused, depositing him at the front gate, where fans were congregating. Demanding his two dollars, the taxi driver hauled him out of the backseat. Dave tried to walk away but was thrown to the ground. A fan who had recognized Holland intervened and the mess was cleared up.

On December 12th, in Memphis, the show was recorded for issue as the *Judas Priest Live* VHS video and laser disc, later reissued with different cover art and two less tracks, the footage also used for broadcast on MTV, the band's latest best friend by far. Later, the concert showed up as part of the *Metalogy* box set and then, in 2006, as the *Live Vengeance '82* DVD.

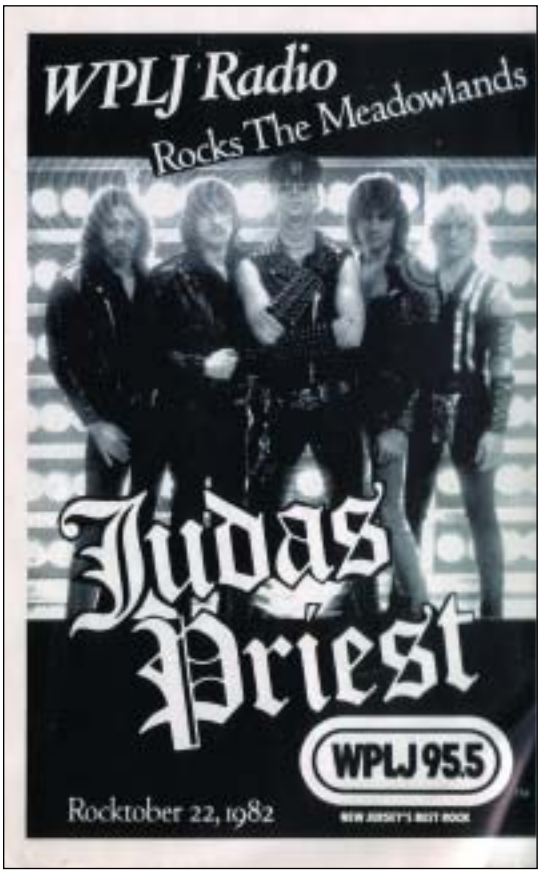
SPEND THANKSGIVING
IN LONDON WITH
JUDAS PRIEST.
COLUMBIA RECORDS AND WESTWOOD ONE
INVITE YOU TO WIN A LONDON VACATION. ENTER HERE.

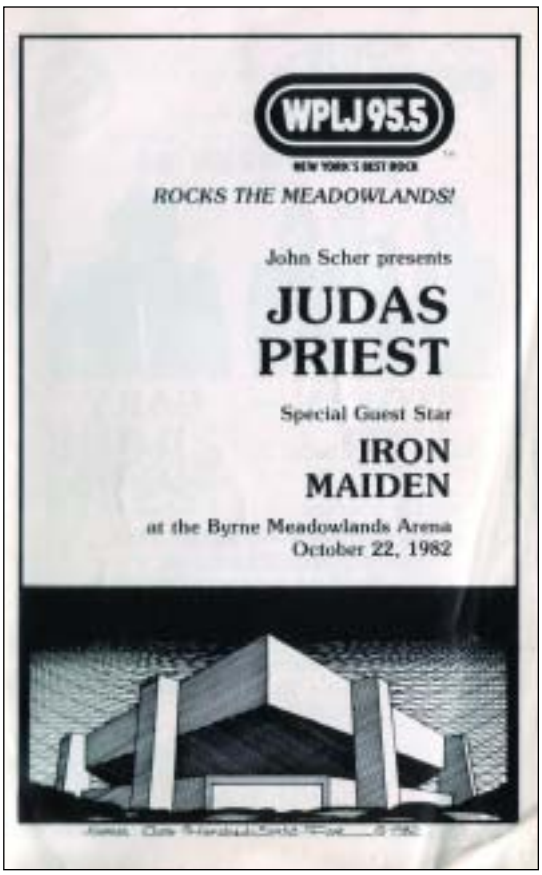
Breaking for Christmas, it was decided that the album was doing so well in the States, that the band had better add a second leg, forsaking their planned European and U.K. jaunt, something that upset the faithful all too familiar with that strategy from Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple. It was quite a turn of events, because previous to the album reversing the band's declining fortunes, the notion kicked around was that Priest didn't have enough money left to mount an American tour at all! K.K. had said the band had been existing on "big loans" and that over the years, the guys had gotten used to keeping up appearances during interviews, concealing from journalists the fact that they were "real skint."

"First of all," defended Rob at the time, "recording *Screaming for Vengeance* ran far longer than we thought, then took off like a rocket in the States. Also, in terms of production, we had to get this mammoth stage set together, and there was no way to use it in England. So we figured, let's do America, go back

Leif Edling

ALL THOSE THINGS THAT HAPPEN HERE SIMPLY DO NOT HAPPEN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD. AND THAT'S ALL A MUSICIAN EVER WANTS, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED.





to England, then do the next album. But of course, the U.S. tour went for nine months instead of six. And because we haven't been back in this length of time, it's important that we really show them what we're doing now. We'll try to put together a bill with three big acts and have a heavy metal Christmas tour."

Rob went so far as to take up a permanent residence in Phoenix, Arizona, which in the '90s became a bit of a bedroom community for many metal stars. Previously, he had been in Walsall, England, not far from where he was raised, his dad's line of work being the steel industry, albeit comfortably well up the line from on the line. Rob's mom worked at a nursery school. The couple had three children, Rob, his sister Susan (married to Ian Hill), and a much younger brother Nigel.

"It's a pity you have to stay in America for so long before you get your total green pass," mused Rob. "In my head, I feel totally English and always will be, but America has certainly become my second home. I spend more time here than anywhere else in the world. So there's the proof really, of how much I enjoy the place. The general attitude of the fans, the

audience, of people in the music business here, I feel, is more professional, or dedicated, more enthusiastic, far more committed. If they get excited over things, they push, they assist you. All those things that happen here simply do not happen anywhere else in the world. And that's all a musician ever wants, as far as I'm concerned."

Madison Square Garden was to be topped by the band's sunny 70-minute set at Apple executive Steve Wozniak's U.S. Festival, on what was called Heavy Metal Day. There were an estimated 300,000 people there that day, the most successful day of the event, with Ozzy, Van Halen, Triumph and Scorpions rocking the metal faithful. It was, as the band has noted, pretty much the perfect exclamation point to the *Screaming for Vengeance* tour, a campaign that found the band playing over 100 shows in the U.S., cementing Priest as the top ambassadors of British steel during one of the most competitive ramp-up periods heavy metal as a genre had ever witnessed.

Noted Rob, directly after the U.S. Festival, "We had two days rehearsal before the U.S. show, in which we played about two hours, and then we went out and played to 300,000 people! But the band is so together now, we just blasted through the set. That show was the climax of '83 for the band, considering the tour went through half of '82 as well. What a great way to finish it off before we come back in 1984."

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

(CBS, January '84)

Side 1

Freewheel Burning
Jawbreaker
Rock Hard Ride Free
The Sentinel

Side 2

Love Bites
Eat Me Alive
Some Heads Are Gonna Roll
Night Comes Down
Heavy Duty
Defenders of the Faith

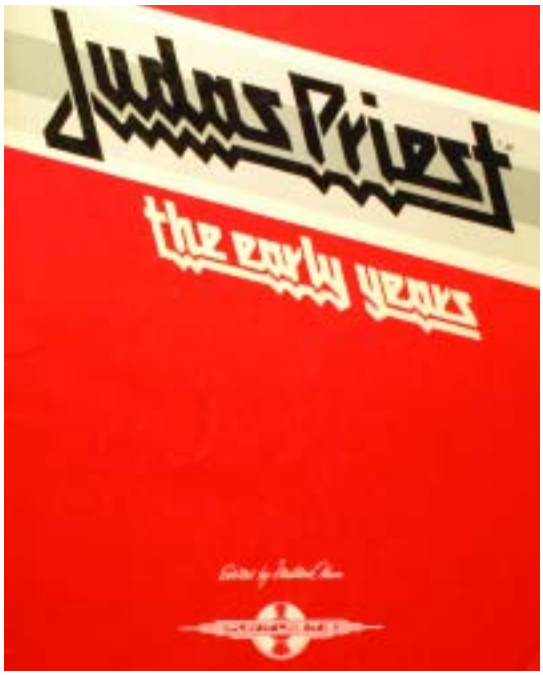
11

"PEOPLE DO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO IT AS A RECORDED RECORD"

– Defenders of the Faith

The Priest came back from twin turbo career highs — the massive *Screaming for Vengeance* tour and album were both critical and commercial successes. The album was essentially a flashier, yet somehow more commercially viable version of the *British Steel* experience, and Priest was awarded with platinum sales in the process. Come time for a follow-up, the band looked to maintain the formula, crafting *Defenders of the Faith*, essentially *Screaming*'s evil twin.

I THINK IT'S AN ALBUM THAT I UNDERESTIMATED, AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF OUR BIGGEST-SELLING ALBUMS.

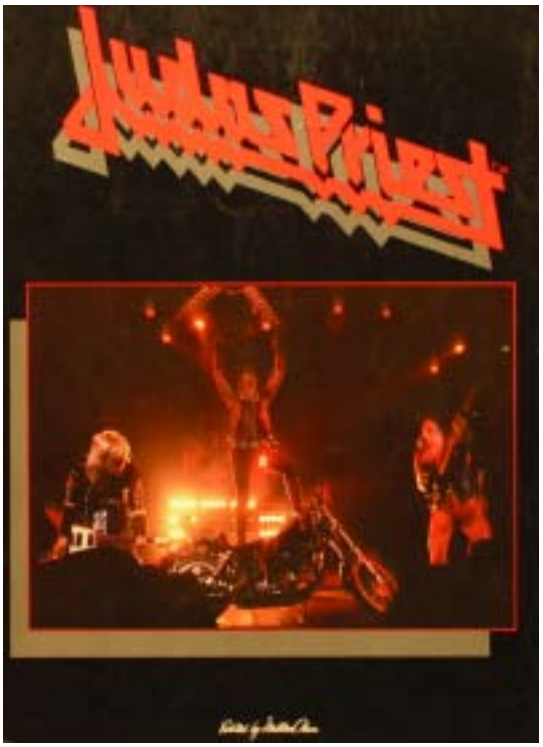


"It was a step forward," reflects Ian. "*Screaming for Vengeance* carried on from what we were doing on *British Steel*, apart from *Point of Entry*, arguably the most commercial album we've done. Other than that, it's been a natural progression from the early days, really, culminating with *Defenders*, which is why it's one of my favorite albums because it's the end of an era, before we started a new one."

It is actually Ian's favorite of the whole catalog. "Yes. Obviously, putting the new one aside, because the new one is always your favorite because you just poured your heart and soul into it for the last couple of years, but of the back catalog, I would have to say *Defenders*, only because it was the last of the traditional Priest albums, know what I mean? Because after that came *Turbo*, which was quite different, not content-wise but sound-wise, with the synth guitars. And from then, the band took on a much harder edge with *Ram it Down* and *Painkiller*. It was a harder, more aggressive direction than we'd been known for, culminating with *Jugulator*, which was the end of that sort of line. *Demolition* is the start of the new one with the inclusion of the more subtle passages and some more subtle songs, but *Defenders* is a definite favorite. And double platinum in America now as well."

"*Defenders* was a really underrated album," adds Glenn. "Even from our point of view, I tended to think of *Defenders* as just another Priest album. But really, with tracks like 'Love Bites' . . . it had some great tracks on there. I think it's an album that I underestimated, and it turned out to be one of our biggest-selling albums."

"All of the songs were great," continues Ian, who is also known to praise the record's variety of speeds and styles. "Very few of them stuck out head and shoulders above the others because they were all so good. As a step forward from *Screaming for Vengeance*, it took that



type of metal to about its peak. I don't think we ever topped that in that idiom. And I don't think anybody else has either, really. That was recorded in Ibiza, in the Mediterranean. And it was a holiday island, so there were multiple distractions — clubs, bars, beaches, boats, the whole thing. We did more messing around than we did recording. And it was just ourselves there; it's really just one studio."

The Ibiza, Spain, studio in which the band had recorded both *Point of Entry* and *Screaming for Vengeance* (Ibiza Sound Studios) had "gone out of business" since the band's last rape and pillage of the place. But the band rebuilt the studio from its shell, Dave Holland investing in the venture, staying back from the mixing sessions in the States so that he could work a deal with a pair of prospective business partners.

"When you think about it," explained Rob, "here we were, we just had this incredible American success with the platinum album and the big U.S. Festival show, and we went to an island that had a studio with nothing in it! Can you imagine that? Any other band, any other manager . . . [Priest manager Bill] Curbishley must've put a great deal of faith and trust in the fact that we knew what we were doing. There wasn't even recording tape on the island! Although none of us are superstitious in the band, I think we saw there was a bit of magic in that place. With Dave's involvement, I suppose that was the prime factor in making us decide to do it. During the day, I'd go with Dave and we'd paint the walls and put the bedroom furniture back in. It was really bizarre. The first time I went there, Dave warned me, 'You'll really be surprised,' and I said, 'No, I can handle anything; I'm shockproof.' So I went up there, and I nearly fell through the floor! I got there as it was dusk, and there wasn't even any electricity. So for the next few weeks, we put the place back together again. The board came back over from Barcelona, and there were about 20 of us struggling to get this humongous board back into the studio, rolling it on logs . . . you wouldn't have believed it if you'd seen it. Here we were, the metal gods, sweating our buns off trying to put this studio back together. And then the place was livable again. That's when we really did sit down and start to write."

In actual fact, the previous version of the studio was an advanced 48-track rig, and it was in the mansion of a German named Fritz, who, according to Ian, had run off owing people a lot of money. The locals got their revenge by raiding the place and taking anything that wasn't bolted down, along with much of what was. The story gets a little sketchy, with Rob remembering that the defaulted payments were on the expensive recording equipment, with the company that supplied it showing up by boat to cart it all back to the mainland. Rob then said that the initial downpayment Priest would make on the equipment turned out to be enough for them to haul all the gear back to the island.

Despite the business shenanigans, *Defenders of the Faith* was recorded in July and August in Ibiza and then mixed in Miami from September through November of '83. Tom Allom once again produced, but Mark Dodson made a return engagement as engineer, replacing Louis Austin, who had engineered the previous three albums. Dodson would be rewarded for his return by getting hit hard by a taxi at about 60 mph, after he and K.K. had just left a nightclub on the island. Miraculously, after bouncing off the windshield and shattering it, he escaped with minor injuries. The laborious mixing sessions actually took place in a warehouse, as the studio was between moves. It is here the band decided on the title of the album, *Defenders of the Faith* winning out over *Keep the Faith*, the faith being, of course, heavy metal, Priest being one of very few major acts who admitted to being a heavy metal band, then or now.

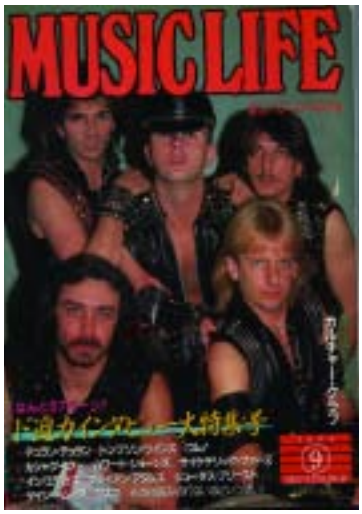
Doug Johnson devised another stylized mascot graphic for the cover art. The colors weren't as distinctive as those on *Screaming for Vengeance*, but the half-tank, half-monster "Metallian" was more complex and interesting than *Screaming*'s rote-by-comparison eagle, known in its flight log as The Hellion. The band agreed that this was what a defender of the faith would look like, and indeed, the stage show would take its cue from Johnson's biomechanical creation. Warned the back cover, "Rising from darkness where all hell hath no mercy and the screams of vengeance echo on

forever, only those who keep the faith shall escape the wrath of the metallian . . . master of all metal."

Ads for the record fueled the fire, claiming "Judas Priest scourge the unbelievers on their hardest album ever," adding, "Convert your friends on tour, and on Columbia Records and Cassettes!" and finally in big type, "Get Thee Behind Judas Priest!"

Threats aside, the record opened with "Freewheel Burning" (working title: "Fast and Furious"), also the album's advance single, a speed metal highball in the spirit of the previous record's title track or "Ram it Down," the title track from two records forward. Curiously, the early issued single version of the song, backed with two U.S. Festival live tracks in the U.K., featured a quiet fade-in followed by an elegiac and haunting *Sad Wings*–style twin lead wash, before the song shuffled clumsily into corporate metal focus. "Another typical Priest track, fast, aggressive," notes Hill, addressing this mad dragster of a fast track. "We had gone through a phase. There's a program over here called *Top of the Pops*, and we call it our *Top of the Pops* phase,

HERE WE WERE, THE METAL GODS, SWEATING OUR BUNS OFF TRYING TO PUT THIS STUDIO BACK TOGETHER.



where you're on the local commercial TV station. I don't know . . . we just wanted to get away from that and wanted to head into a heavier, contemporary direction, at least superficially. I mean, we've always been that way, but people were trying to portray us as something we weren't at one time. That's one of the reasons we thought, well, OK, instead of making a video for the most obviously commercial one, or the ballad or whatever, we'll go ahead and do one with our other dimension [laughs]."

And so they did, churning out a lip-synched live clip set to lasers, interspersed with video arcade hijinks, the lasers getting out of control, Rob looking cool atop his Harley. Glenn's deliberate-yet-journeying solo is among his most memorable and wild, and Rob sings his head off. But the track as a whole leaves something to be desired, mainly due to the stodgy

PEOPLE DO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO IT AS A RECORDED RECORD

Dion DeTora

drumming and production. For a balls-out rocker, there isn't much energy welling up from the engine room. Of note, the band was a bit irked at the label. As agreed upon, the band worked hard to get the track finished and mixed ahead of the album for issue as an advance single. But then it was sat on for a few weeks, the band presuming that the suits were waiting to hear if they liked anything better.

"I guess the initial approach for this album was wanting to come up with ten killer tracks, and at the time, not really having a positive theme," said Rob, on the tour trail for the album in 1984. "Just knowing that we wanted the usual series of rhythms, beats across the sections, and metal music from the fast, mad ones like 'Jawbreaker' and 'Freewheel Burning,' to the real slogging ones like 'Heavy Duty' and 'Defenders of the Faith.' Although it's probably taken us longer to write this album than anything else, the songs did seem to come together reasonably easy. It's always a struggle to come up with good follow-up tunes, but I think that we got more of an incentive going for us on the strength of the success in the States. The pressure was there, but it was good pressure."

Asked if the band could or would conjure a single as flagrantly light as Van Halen's "Jump," Rob answered emphatically in the negative. "I'm not saying we wouldn't release a single like 'Night Comes Down'; it's well within our limits. But Van Halen — and I'm sure they'd be the first to admit it — aren't a heavy metal band. They're a pop rock band, and there's nothing wrong with that. I think they're great. But we are heavy metal and there's no way we'd stray from those margins. Otherwise we'd have already done it. We've never really looked at the single chart and said, 'Ooh, we want a hit single.' But we'd be hypocritical to say that we wouldn't like it some day. I'd love to see this band get a Top 10 single in the States."

"Jawbreaker" was a much more inspired heavy rocker, its strong melody recalling the sturdiness of Priest's writing in the '70s, and even that of Scorpions from a similar time and clime. Lyrically, Rob has said point-blank it's about "cocksucking," pretty bloody obvious actually. The song's highlights include the little staccato guitar breaks, its ripping heavy metal chorus and K.K.'s howling, then quite musical, guitar solo.

"Rock Hard Ride Free" is an underrated Priest classic, derided for its pedestrian frame, but unrightly so, given its sturdy construction and complex melodies and mood changes. The song was originally tabled as "Fight for Your Life," much of it the same, save for its completely different chorus, both musically and lyrically, and a somewhat differently meandering instrumental break. This outtake can be heard on the 2001 remaster of *Hell Bent for Leather*. K.K. had joked that the chorus lyric — particularly "Fight for your money," was obviously a bit ludicrous, noting that anyone could see why they would overhaul the song to what it became. As it stood proud on *Defenders*, the song took on an overt biker presence, given the title, and given its road song vibe, a palpable

case of white line fever riding on the wind after the song's longish 5:34 passes wistfully.

Says Ian of "The Sentinel," arguably the album's masterpiece, "That one's always been an epic, yeah. It's one of my favorite songs as well, and until very recently it's been included in the live set. And I think, in fact, we've just only recently dropped it. It's a great, exciting track and it's a bit of a showpiece for Ken as well."

The riff work on "The Sentinel" is exquisite and exacting, Glenn and K.K. demonstrating why they are the kings of twin-axed heavy metal. The chorus is a corker as well, Rob grinding out memorable lines after a curious show tune vocal melody in the brief pre-chorus. The half-speed instrumental break is a treat as well, even if the soloing in this one is both a bit subdued and widdly. Again, one shakes one's head at the debilitating effect of Allom's awful production. The rhythm section of Dave and Ian sounds declawed, lacking in power, woefully ungroovy.

Side two of the original vinyl opens with the perky and efficient "Love Bites." Priest arranges this one rife with pregnant pauses, coming up with a catchy-but-still-thudly heavy metal

I WAS HYSTERICAL IN A BAR IN IBIZA AND I SHOWED THE LYRICS TO KEN AND SAID, 'CHECK THESE OUT.'

anthem about vampiric seduction. Says Ian, "We had great fun recording 'Love Bites'; I used a de-tuned eight-string bass on the intro to that." Despite some rudimentary backward effects in the song, there is no backmasking (lyrics played backwards that supposedly revealed Satanic messages). In fact, Rob, who called the song "aortic heavy metal," joked that Priest considered throwing in a backmask, one that would have said, "Drink a lot of milk."

A faux-live video was also hatched for the song, highlighting the impressive Metallian stage set, and, irritatingly, Holland's cymbal-whacking prowess. "With our videos, we consistently tried to capture the power of the music and put it into a visual format," explains Rob. "Essentially, that comes down to the costumes and the stage set, plus everything else that goes with it. I think we come pretty close to harnessing that power. You can't get more metal than what you see onstage for a clip like 'Love Bites.' God only knows how many hundreds of pounds it all weighs. Our stage sets make our videos look a lot stronger. From the early days, we've always put money back into the shows. And obviously, the bigger you get, the bigger the stage show has to be, plus the more money you have to spend. Older videos like 'Breaking the Law' and 'Don't Go' were a little bit like mini movies. Now we find that as we develop sets, like the one we used on the *Defenders of the Faith* tour, we would much rather exploit the potential behind them rather than going to a location type of situation."

"Eat Me Alive" followed amusingly and logically after "Love Bites," this one being another malevolent rocker supporting the premise that Priest wasn't about to go light. The S&M lyric — the song's working title was "Bad Girls Wear Leather" — got Rob in trouble with Tipper Gore and the PMRC (Parents Music Resource

Judas Priest
NEW 7" & 3 TRACK 12" SINGLE
SOME HEADS ARE GONNA ROLL
7" & 3 TRACK 12" CONTAINS A LIVE VERSION OF 'GREEN MANALISHI'
FREE JUDAS PRIEST STENCIL WITH LIMITED EDITION 12"

Center), but Rob says, "I just wanted to write a really sexy heavy metal lyric. I was drunk when I wrote that. I was hysterical in a bar in Ibiza and I showed the lyrics to Ken and said, 'Check these out.' A lot of the verses we couldn't use, because they were really obscene! We cooled it down a bit." Rob goes on to say that his attitude is "get it out in the open and let everybody have a good look at it! Subtlety has never been a trademark of this band."

"Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" is a moody elephantine rocker somewhat in the spirit of "Rock Hard Ride Free." Unlike the poppier material on *Turbo*, or even *Point of Entry*, such writing on *Defenders*, due partially to the mechanical, turgid mix of the album, came off comparatively leaden and claustrophobic. That, however, made "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" another strong *Defenders* track — somehow a machine-like vibe fit the song's hypnotic construction. The song came from outside writer Bob Halligan Jr., brought back after penning "(Take These) Chains" for *Screaming for Vengeance*. Halligan has said the lyric was a warning about future holocausts. Melodically passionate, particularly in the pre-chorus and

the break, this one became the album's second single, backed with "Breaking the Law" live in the States, and "Green Manalishi" in the U.K. It failed to chart in either territory. "Jawbreaker" was issued as a final single, only in America, and it failed to chart as well.

"Night Comes Down" shares the gauzy, bluesy bleakness of "Rock Hard Ride Free" and "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll," but is in fact structured as a sort of power ballad. Fortunately, in 1984, these "ballads" had not become formulaic yet, and "Night Comes Down" cogently and effortlessly weaves heavy bits in with the soft reflection.

"Heavy Duty"/"Defenders of the Faith" closes the record in churlish, plodding "Take On the World"/"United" fashion, this one the closest of the lot to the "We Will Rock You" imprint from stated Priest influence Queen.

"Heavy Duty" at least chugs along to a song-worthy enough riff, its 2:25 churn morphing into 1:30 of "Defenders of the Faith," which is essentially a second chorus to "Heavy Duty."

"I guess the fact that we came up with such a good record on *Screaming*, and that was so successful for us, that the pressure was on, really," reflects K.K., 20 years later, on the *Defenders* era. "And I think, even though there is so much good material on there, if you listen — people do actually listen to it as a recorded record — if you listen to it closely, you'll hear us trying to get that extra bit out of it, extra heaviness, an extra bit out of an effect or something, and it probably seems a little bit jumpy in places. You can see us really trying to conjure up new things. But by and large, there's a lot of good material on there."

K.K. and Glenn have also agreed that the album was quite similar to *Screaming*, that it worked with the same basic ingredients but offered better value for the money by covering all the bases. Unfortunately they are right — *Defenders* felt a bit like the work of a band with a checklist, a band boxed in by checking off musical styles, but also by having to conform in style and tone to their strong-willed

Dion DeTora

GET IT OUT IN THE OPEN AND LET EVERYBODY HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT IT! SUBTLETY HAS NEVER BEEN A TRADEMARK OF THIS BAND.

PEOPLE DO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO IT AS A RECORDED RECORD

previous record. Judas Priest's music was now illustrated, when once it was photographed.

Defenders of the Faith would end up going gold immediately, but took four years to reach platinum. Its chart placement in the U.K. (#19) and America (#18) would mark a slight downgrade versus *Screaming* (#11 and #17 respectively), but still, this was a band thriving with its chosen and professed genre at large, heavy metal dominating the charts with young and old bands alike. *Defenders* was also the record for which the band signed on with Bill Curbishley and Trinifold Management. More accurately, this key fortuitous career move occurred back in May of '83, smack in the middle of the *Screaming for Vengeance* cycle, Bill working out a new five-year deal for the band, doing the good business that had made him a legend during his association with The Who.

Said Rob, just after the previous year's triumphant U.S. Festival performance, of the Curbishley connection, "It was a thrill when he approached us in the first place, because he'd never managed anyone else other than The Who. He's been watching Priest develop over the years and said if there was any band that he wanted to get involved with after The Who was finished, it was Judas Priest, an honor in itself, because this guy is a very prestigious person. We're very excited. We've had a couple of deep, meaningful meetings over the past few days, and we've got the next couple of years already planned in terms of what we'll attempt to do.

This is just the beginning. It might seem as though we've been together for 12 years, which we have, but I'll tell you, you ain't seen nothing yet! I'm sure that having a member of his caliber will enable us to do things and to take entry into certain aspects which we otherwise wouldn't have been able to do. There'll be a general expansion of the band's ability on a worldwide level. We've still got so much work to do in Europe, Japan, Australia, so many places to go to. We've done as much as we could with our previous management company, but Priest is getting bigger and bigger, and we need to be surrounded by the people who are prepared to cope with that situation. Bill's the perfect man. I feel that this is going to be — what's that they said when they stepped off the spacecraft? — one small step for Priest, one giant leap for heavy metal."

Despite the album's success, the numbers for *Defenders of the Faith* were indeed down from those of the firecracker response to its predecessor. No monster hit single like "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" fell out of it, and perhaps hurting more, the album was derided

ONE SMALL STEP FOR PRIEST,

ONE GIANT LEAP FOR HEAVY METAL.

at the time as *Screaming for Vengeance II* or *Screaming for Vengeance Lite*, the former quite true, the latter less so, given the relative lack of party rockers on the current release.

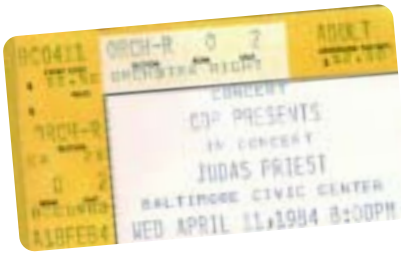
On tour, the band played every number from the album save for "Eat Me Alive," although "Rock Hard Ride Free," "Night Comes Down" and "Heavy Duty" wouldn't last

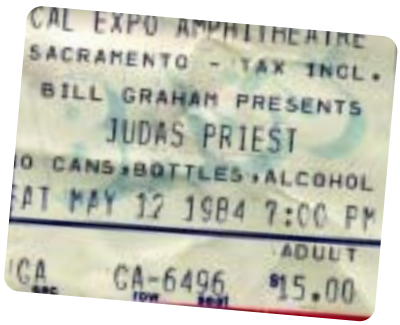
beyond the tour. In December of '83, the band embarked on a small warm-up tour of Europe, playing smaller venues, mostly theaters, with Quiet Riot as support. The European tour proper kicked off in January, with Raven and Ted Nugent supporting.

For their assault on America, Priest ditched the backdrop they had been using in Europe

and stretched out with the famous Metallian stage set. Rob would emerge from its mouth every night, and all told, it was quite impressive. Back-up came from Great White, and, into the summer, Kick Axe — this was Kick Axe's third tour for their excellent *Vices* debut, and the Priest slot was instrumental in pushing the album near gold in the U.S.

Recalls Kick Axe's Victor Langen, "They were top-notch all the way, fine gents. I think Glenn and K.K. liked to go golfing, which I found odd at the time. We didn't know anything about golfing. I guess you have to have a Scottish background [laughs]. But yeah, I just remember being in awe of the whole thing, and even meeting them in Calgary, Canada, when we had our official contact with them. They came down and saw us play. It was the very day that *Vices* was released. We were doing a radio broadcast on a radio station in Calgary, CJ92





or something, and these guys came down after they played the Saddledome, and it was Rob Halford personally that came to the dressing room and just said they were giving the toss to Great White, and it was a done deal that we had to open for Priest on the rest of their North American tour. And we thought, 'Holy God, these guys are on heroin. This is just way beyond reality.' But he was true to his word. And that was that."

"In Atlanta, Georgia, they summoned us to their dressing room," continues Victor. "The big tour manager guy comes to grab us from our dressing room, at the end of their set, and he says, 'Come with me; Judas Priest wants to speak to you.' And we thought, 'Oh no, we're getting fired' [laughs]. And it was to give us shit for hiding from them. Because we were just too

I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU GUYS. WE REALLY NEEDED SOME NEW SEATS.

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

scared . . . I don't know what the word is, not *scared*, but in awe of it all? We didn't want to press ourselves on them to say hello or anything. But they summoned us to their dressing room in Atlanta and that's where things got much better. They said, 'Look, we like you! Don't be shy. Don't be hiding away. Let's be buddies.' And we did 35 dates with them. I'd like to catch up with them one of these days. . .."

The final leg saw the band in Japan for four dates; this would be Priest's first time back since the recording of the landmark *Unleashed in the East* live albums five years earlier.

In June of '84, a gig at Madison Square Garden got out of control, with fans ripping up their foam seats and tossing them toward the stage. One report had Rob sitting on the forks of his motorbike, uttering with a mischievous laugh, "New York, you sick motherfuckers" while a snowstorm of foam covered the stage. K.K. later said that the band's insurers were on the hook for more than a half-million dollars in compensation to repair the damage. Weeks after the fact, K.K. and Glenn were back at the Garden to watch some tennis, after which an MSG employee came up to them and said, "I just wanted to thank you guys. We really needed some new seats."

TURBO

(CBS, April '86)

Side 1

Turbo Lover
Locked in
Private Property
Parental Guidance
Rock You all Around the World

Side 2

Out in the Cold
Wild Nights, Hot & Crazy Days
Hot for Love
Reckless

12

"FLOWERS DIDN'T GROW IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD"

– Turbo

As is the mark of many a great band, Priest chose not to stagnate come time for the follow-up to *Defenders of the Faith*. *Defenders* was indeed viewed by many as the second of a pair with *Screaming for Vengeance*, but no one was about to make it a threesome. *Turbo*, issued in April 1986, was to become the most contentious album of the band's career, arguably eclipsing the albums from the Ripper years, and definitely trumping the concern around the light-but-still-on-track *Point of Entry* release.

Interestingly, given the two-year gap since the last album, Priest talked about making *Turbo* a double, sold close to single LP price as sort of a gift to the fans, chock full of 18 songs, allowing for more variety in style. K.K.'s suggested title for the project was *Twin Turbos*, and it was to loosely encompass all the styles the band had worked in thus far, spruced up by current recording techniques. There was also talk of issuing a double live album, commemorating the immense tour mounted for *Defenders of the Faith*, and the tenth anniversary of the band's partnership with CBS Records. Indeed, the fact the band was brimming with fresh ideas was part of the reason behind nixing the live record, and all agreed that after one more studio album, a live album would be the ticket.

So instead we got the band's tenth studio album, *Turbo*, a record that the ads called "Fuel for life!!!" awkwardly adding "Judas Priest slam shifts into hyperdrive," and finally, exhorting the masses to "Get running on Turbo power!"

With more time than ever to prepare for an album, Priest got weird, recording in digital for the first time, most notably adding guitar synthesizers to the mix, something that baby Priests Iron Maiden would adopt as well with *Somewhere in Time* a few months later. Adding to the intrigue, the band had decided to write even more melodically, noting that melody reigned on their biggest hits, even joking that all the dark songs they were writing were beginning to depress even them! As well, unashamedly, just like Scorpions around the time of *Love at First Sting*, the band really wanted to break big, eyeing and envying upstart competitors like Mötley Crüe, Ratt, Dokken, Quiet Riot, Def Leppard and Twisted Sister, and cannily concluding that the time was right for Priest to cash in with multi-platinum sales.

On the subject of the album's "modern" production, Rob explained that, "we utilized the Sony Digital recording system, and the results really belt out of the car radio or a home stereo. Using that system gave us a very clean, yet very heavy quality, which made it sound like we were really there on the tape. I had never heard anything sound quite so good before, especially by us. It truly is an amazing advance."

With respect to the guitar synths, and their interaction with Rob's vocals, Halford says, "it really didn't make a difference to my performance. But I found that with the use of the guitar synths, as well as digital rather than analog

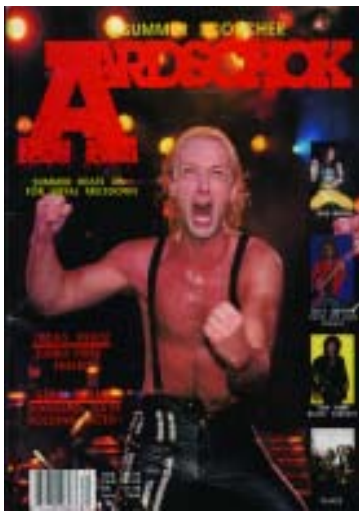
HIT PARADER
WHO RULES HEAVY METAL?
MOTLEY CRUE
DEF LEPPARD
KISS
RATT
AC/DC
ACCEPT
DOKKEN
VAN HALEN
QUEENSRYCHE
OZZY OSBOURNE
THE FIRM
JUDAS PRIEST VS. IRON MAIDEN

HIT PARADER'S
HEAVY METAL
HEROES
THE SCORPIONS VS. JUDAS PRIEST

METAL
JUDAS!
TARZEN · VANDENBERG · BLACKMORE · KEEL

METAL
DOKKEN
LEGACY
GENOCIDIO
ANTHRAX
NIGHT RANGER
POSTER
DEEP PURPLE
JUDAS PRIEST

METAL MANIA
#15
$1.50


SUMMER SCORCHER
AEROSMITH

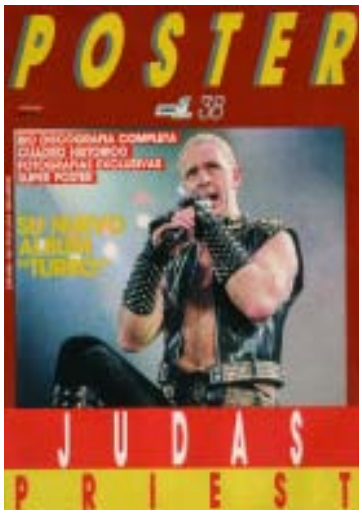
CIRCUS
DOKKEN
METAL-LICA
RATT
SONGS HITS
JUDAS PRIEST
VAN HALEN

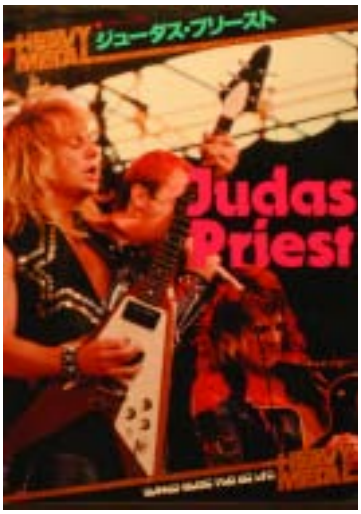
METAL
JUDAS PRIEST
VAN HALEN

KERRANG!
THE RETURN OF HALFORD'S HEROES

recording, there is a great deal more nuance available to the vocalist. Each instrument is so clear there's room to try new things you might have thought would get buried either in the recording or the mix. We've had the chance to see the way technology has grown over the years. Heavy metal has never been known for using a great deal of subtlety or imagination in its recording procedures, but we've gone out of the way to find the most advanced and sophisticated way of recording our music. It's made a difference to us as musicians, and I feel it will have an impact on the fans as well. Because of the way we recorded it, *Turbo* has so much more power and impact than our past albums. We always strived for this kind of sound, but it just wasn't available to us. When you combine the improvements in sound quality with the strength of the material we have, you end up with an incredible album. We were able to spend a great deal of time writing the songs for this LP, and because we weren't under a great deal of time pressure, we were able to explore areas we had not looked at before."

THE ACTUAL SOUNDS COMING OUT OF THE SPEAKERS JUST BLEW US AWAY.





METAL
JUDAS PRIEST
LOS PECADORES SE ARREPIENTEN
WHITESNAKE EN LA TEXXAS JAM
MÖTLEY CRÜE ★ METALLICA ★ S. VAI
WHITE TIGER ★ POSTER MANOWAR

After writing sessions in Marbella, Spain, the band went once again with Tom Allom to Compass Point in Nassau in the summer of '85 for the recording of the album, Compass Point being in possession of one of the first Sony Digital systems. The band appreciated Tom immensely (despite the occasional row), citing his skills gained from his background as an engineer before becoming a top-flight in-demand producer. Bill Dooley, a Berklee College of Music grad from a decade earlier, was to be Tom's assistant, hired officially as the album's engineer.

Said Rob to *Turbo Fax* shortly after the sessions, "The songs, the performance, the production — everything just came together the way we wanted. In a way, I believe it's a more sophisticated album and, of course, we definitely worked in a different recording style with Sony Digital. That allowed us to explore certain technical dimensions that we'd never worked in before. That enhanced the overall quality and production. The actual sounds coming out of the speakers just blew us away. And, when you've worked in studios for as long as we have, you can really tell the difference between working digitally and the normal way. More than anything, you get a better separation in the sounds, where nothing overlaps. And since we were aware that we were going to be making CDs, the best way to record them is digitally. There are no keyboards — it was just guitar synths. When K.K. and Glenn began working with them, one of the things that really excited them was that they knew they were going to be able to reproduce all of the sounds onstage. If you listen closely, you can actually tell it is a guitar-oriented sound. You can get the pull of a string on a synthesized guitar, which you can't get on a flat keyboard. The physical aspects are all there. Glenn and K.K. really had a handle on what they could do with them and were able to explore a lot of new areas, which ultimately helped to expand the Priest sound. Using new technology is always interesting, but you have to know exactly what you're doing. I think what Glenn and K.K. proved is that guitar synths can have an incredible effect if they're used properly. And there's no reason why you shouldn't incorporate synthesized sounds into metal music. You can still make it sound strong, powerful and heavy."

But it was not all fun in the sun for the man at the mic, Rob Halford. By this point, Rob was a self-admitted alcoholic and cocaine addict, partially as a result of the pressure to stay closeted while all the male-female mayhem took place on the wild road. Then his own private life took a turn for the worse. "Most of the men

I'm attracted to are straight men," said Rob, to *The Advocate*. "The boy I was dating back then had a cocaine problem. We had one of those bombastic physical attractions, and there was a tremendous amount of violence. We used to beat the crap out of each other in the drunken and cocaine rages that we had. And one day we were fighting, and I left for my own safety and called a cab. As I was getting in the cab, he came up to me and said, 'Look, I just want to let you know I love you very much.' And when he turned away, I saw that he had a gun. Moments later, he put the gun to his head and killed himself."

Rob checked into a Phoenix rehab on January 6, 1986, after the incident, as he had the previous year, when a Percodan overdose put him in the hospital, shortly after a November '85 rehearsal for the *Turbo* tour. He emerged 33 days later, sober and staying that way, with a sense that his bandmates hadn't taken his plight very seriously, K.K. pretty much admitting as much, thinking it was perhaps all a normal part of being a rock 'n' roller.

"I've been there, haven't I?" mused Rob years later on this chapter of his life, and ruminating on the death of Alice in Chains' Layne Staley. "I've been there myself, so I can understand why you were supposedly driven to do this. It's simple — too much of anything is a bad thing. To excess of whatever it might be — apart from music — too much booze, too much smoking, too much drugs; it's just destructive. But that's a story in and of itself. That would be a great interview, to talk to people, 'Why did you get into that world?' Sometimes you don't deliberately enter it. It seems that most musicians have compulsive/excessive disorders — I know I do. And so when I started drinking and drugging, it was like, keep doing it and doing it and doing it until you're unconscious on the floor — you don't know when to stop."

Getting back to *Turbo*, Glenn had said at the time that the band indeed had come up with 19 songs, but when the label had shot down the idea of an expensive and somewhat odd double heavy metal studio album, this left the band with ample choice of songs for the slimmed-down record to come. The plan was to go with the more upbeat songs of the bunch, and — wishfully thinking — add a bunch of the unused tunes to the live album that was firmly in the works for the period following *Turbo*. K.K. had expressed reservations with respect to the fan reaction to the relatively accessible songs selected, adding that the silver lining to going with the commercial tracks was that the album would reflect an unprecedented consistency of style for one of the band's records.

Nine of the tracks from these "double album" sessions would end up comprising *Turbo*, with four others — "Ram it Down," "Hard as Iron," "Love You to Death" and "Monsters of Rock" — ending up on the next studio album, *Ram it Down*. Two of the tracks, "Under the Gun" and "Fighting for Your Love," are still unreleased, while "Red, White & Blue," "Prisoner of Your Eyes" and "All Fired Up" showed up as bonus tracks on the remastered reissues of the band's catalog with CBS.

Even the *Turbo* album cover seemed curiously light, artist Doug Johnson for the third time turning in a wrapper in a cartoony direction, this one with washed-out, less bold colors, but with a convincing sense of motion captured nonetheless.

The album kicked off proudly with an anthem for the day, an erstwhile title track called "Turbo Lover." This one's got Rob a bit camp, a bit silly in his seduction, as the band builds a sophisticated series of oneupmanships. The song was inspired by Porsche Turbos, Ian pointing out that K.K. and Glenn had recently bought them, adding that he had even bought a vacuum cleaner once himself because it was called a "turbo." The guitar solo is one of Glenn's best of the period, well-composed, like the track, building in a head-of-steam fashion. "Turbo Lover" was issued as the record's first single, backed with "Hot for Love" for release simultaneous with the album, in the U.K., then backed with "Reckless" for issue in the States three months later. The video for "Turbo Lover" sees the band riding through the desert on motorcycles, shot in annoying infrared, chased by a proposed mascot for the band, a scrap-metal robot with a skull head.

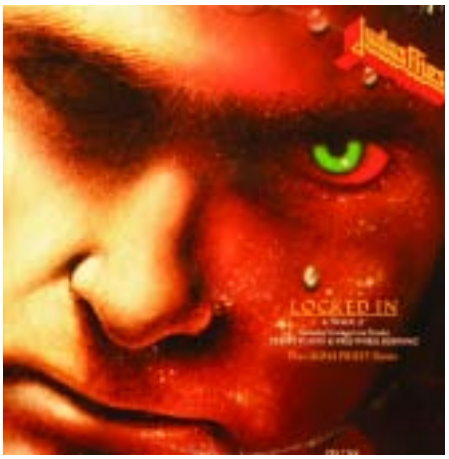
"Locked In" is sort of son of "Turbo Lover," a similarly joyous brisk rocker with many of

JUDAS PRIEST
JUDAS PRIEST
Over 750,000 albums sold!
JUDAS PRIEST
Two-month SRO tour...650,000 tickets!!!
JUDAS PRIEST
Since release, consistent Top 10 requests at radio,
with Top 5 phones at: KLOS/Los Angeles,
KUPD/Phoenix, KISW/Seattle, WLLZ/Detroit,
WYNF/Tampa, KISS/San Antonio, KSHE/St. Louis,
KSJO/San Jose, WPYX/Albany, KBPI/Denver,
WYSP/Philadelphia, KTXQ/Dallas and more.....
JUDAS PRIEST; JUDAS PRIEST IS ROCK 'N' ROLL!!
TURBO LOVER

the same fresh textures — surprisingly, it would be played live on the ensuing tour, then no more. A compositional pattern was getting established, and that was of a record that had strong choruses that elevated the game of what came before. Sure, *Turbo* was adding up to something sort of happy and even juvenile, but through the controversy around the guitar synthesizers, Priest cut a new sophistication of hook. Whereas on "Turbo Lover," the speaker is the aggressor, until both engines purr with delight, "Locked In" is a standard "girl, you drive me crazy" lyric that wouldn't win any awards for originality.

"Locked In" was launched as the album's second single, backed with "Hot for Love" in the States and "Reckless" in the U.K., the U.K. 12˝ adding live versions of "Desert Plains" and "Freewheel Burning." Neither of *Turbo*'s two singles would chart, although the album would hit #33 in the U.K. and #17 in America. The American showing matched roughly that of *Defenders*, which notched a #18 slot, but #33 in the U.K. was a big drop from *Defenders*' #19 placement, demonstrating an oft-proven maxim, namely that Americans like their metal sweeter and neater.

The video for "Locked In" is a classic bit of '80s silliness, the band racing to the scene on motorbikes (not Harleys either, but Honda Rebels), while a semi-mechanical skeleton (the same one as in the "Turbo Lover" video) mimes the odd vocal and twitches around. Rob gets caged by a gaggle of cagey women in a surreal torch-lit B-movie cave setting and hung upside down on a swinging gurney. K.K. and Glenn prowl around, disarm an obese and diapered worker with a Twinkie enticement and rescue Rob. Dave and Ian sort of look on while K.K. and Glenn accomplish the rescue.



KEEP DOING IT AND DOING IT AND DOING IT UNTIL YOU'RE UNCONSCIOUS ON THE FLOOR — YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN TO STOP.

Ian calls "Locked In" the most elaborate video of the entire Priest repertoire. "That was a huge production, really. It took two or three days to record that. 'Locked In' and 'Turbo Lover' were done in L.A., where all the music companies are. Money-wise, with videos, you might get an advance, but whatever you got as an advance had to be paid back. In the long run, the band usually ends up paying for most things. But we didn't really object, not really. I mean, it helped to promote the album. You can add a few thousand album sales on the end. So whatever you spent on the video, you would recoup it. And of course, there's always the opportunity to release the video in its own right, as we've done."

Both videos, along with all of Priest's preceding clips since 1980, were issued in 1986 on a VHS video called *Fuel for Life*, which was certified gold in April of the following year. The promotional campaign for *Turbo* was also loosely deemed *Fuel for Life*, and it featured

comical TV ads for the album, one with Rob as a crossing guard, another with Rob in a suit, spoofing an American Express ad.

Next up on the album was "Private Property," melodic but dark, with a bit of a "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" chug, along with a few nice shifts of tone and a noisy but entertaining axe solo from Glenn. As a trivia note, Jeff Martin from Surgical Steel, a friend of Rob's from their shared Phoenix base, ended up getting invited down to the Bahamas with his wife, all expenses paid for two weeks, to help out, uncredited, on the album. Martin provided a verse of lyrics to this one, as well as backing vocals on "Wild Nights, Hot & Crazy Days." A further Priest connection would arise through Martin's membership in Racer X, which would cough up a drummer named Scott Travis to the band come 1990's *Painkiller*.

Julio Eglesias was also at Compass Point recording at the time, and Martin recalls fondly beating him at pool. The presence of Eglesias prompted weak and short-lived rumors that Priest were recording a song with the tanned crooner. As far as it seemed to get was a quip from Eglesias that he would like to take a crack at "Prisoner of Your Eyes."

"I know exactly how that came about," says Glenn, of the rumor. "We were recording at the same studio and actually, we've recorded in the

BUT WHEN YOU CREATE SOMETHING, IT'S YOUR DUTY TO WANT THE WORLD TO SEE IT.

same place as him twice, once in Florida, and once in Nassau. In actual fact, at the one studio, Sony had bought him a Ferrari Testa Rossa for selling so many records, which pissed us off because we were on Sony as well, and we couldn't understand why they hadn't bought us one. Of course, he always used to have two or three serious-looking girls on his arm, so Julio is a bit of a hero of ours. But I don't think there was ever talk of recording with him. It would have been interesting. If he let me have the Testa Rossa, I would certainly consider letting him do that [laughs]."

Priest really got down to pandering for "Parental Guidance," a shockingly simple kiddie rocker that, granted, has some value in terms of Rob checklisting the plight of the misunderstood teenager as he argues with dad. The vocal melody is too much for the longtime Priest fan to bear, but an endearing twist occurs at the end, with the pimply miscreant inviting dad out for some rock 'n' roll. Past the printed lyric, Rob knocks off a quote from "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" and then the track, fortunately, is done.

"Parental Guidance" was motivated by the fact that, at the time, a debate was raging about the alleged harmful qualities of heavy metal lyrics, Tipper Gore and the PMRC being the most vocal about it, with various TV religious fanatics staging record burnings while raving about (what turned out to be a fictional) epidemic of child abductions for use in satanic rituals. Priest seemed to take the most stick for the last album's "Eat Me Alive," K.K. remarking that while they were mixing the album, he would catch out of the corner of his eye the song being pilloried through various TV reports. Amusingly, K.K. also says that part of the reason the lyrics are so benign all over *Turbo* was that he could envision the PMRC looking for more filth, but having to go away empty-handed. In any event, "Eat Me Alive" was #3 on Tipper's "Filthy 15" and very serious lobbying was underway to get the songs of Priest and many others (including Cyndi Lauper!) stickered as naughty.

On the press trail for the album, Rob talked about "Parental Guidance," and why no video had been shot for the popular track. "The reason we didn't do one for it was we felt the subject matter of the song had been a little oversaturated in recent months. We were concerned there might be a negative reaction to it if we had put it out first. 'Locked In' represented the overall style of the *Turbo* album. We want to go with the song that when people heard it on the radio, they'd say, 'A-ha, it's Judas Priest.'"

It's understandable that people would cast a disapproving glare toward Judas Priest for giving in to commercial concerns. But you had to hand it to them — they didn't try to hide the fact that they were selling out, or at least giving it a shot. Indeed, one could call this selling out

THE NEXT ALBUM IS GONNA MAKE 'EM REALLY WANT TO VOMIT! WE'LL PROBABLY PUT TOGETHER THE WORST-SOUNDING, MOST DIABOLICAL, WITCH-HUNTING ALBUM YOU'VE EVER HEARD.

for maybe the third time. As discussed earlier, *British Steel* was a pronounced dumbing-down of the sound after the magnificence of *Hell Bent for Leather*, and *Point of Entry* was a sweetening of *British Steel*'s riff-dependent style for radio.

"You can go so far in heavy metal," said K.K. back in the summer of '86, dollar signs swirling. "You can become quite famous, quite well-off financially, but you never get big, real big. Judas Priest has been coming to America for nearly ten years, and we've got a great following on the road. God, we play to thousands of people. But our biggest-selling album to date has been only 1.5 million. That was *Screaming for Vengeance*, and that's because it had 'You've Got Another Thing Comin" on it. It's a frustrating thing, really, doing an album and still selling to the same people, getting the same amount in the concerts. I think Judas Priest has got to make it big before we wrap it up. You've got to have that four- or five-million-selling album. And then we can rest assured that bands following in our footsteps have got a good chance out there. Not as though we're saying, 'Hang on, all this isn't enough for us.' But when you create something, it's your duty to want the world to see it."

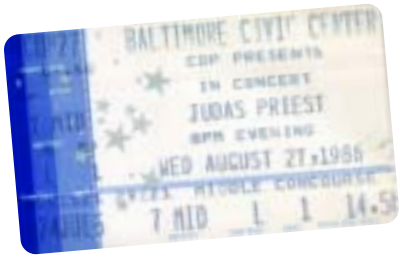
K.K. then marvels at the idea of there being at least five potential singles on *Turbo*, adding the caveat, "If none of them take off in a big way, I think somebody's trying to tell us something." About the double album idea, he says, "We had nine tracks that were out-and-out headbanging, heavy stuff that nobody except our fans would ever play, and then the nine tracks that we put on this album. We decided to go with this lot first, because it works really well together. What's on this album is the one side of Judas Priest, like 'Living After Midnight,' 'Breaking the Law,' and 'You've Got Another Thing Comin'.' All the stuff we've got left is . . . demonic. I'll tell you what, if this album goes ignored, then watch out, as the next album is gonna make 'em really want to vomit! We'll probably put together the worst-sounding, most diabolical, witch-hunting album you've ever heard [laughs]."

Addressing the topic of the tour, K.K. adds, "It's important for us to play, so the word gets around that Judas Priest concerts are OK — we don't swear between songs, and things like that. There's lots of kids out there who want to go to Judas Priest concerts but people won't let them

because of this image we've got, which is totally wrong. I suppose it's our fault. We went around for ten years into radio stations in leather jackets and studs. And I guess when we walked out the door, they probably just laughed at us a little bit. But we were very sincere."

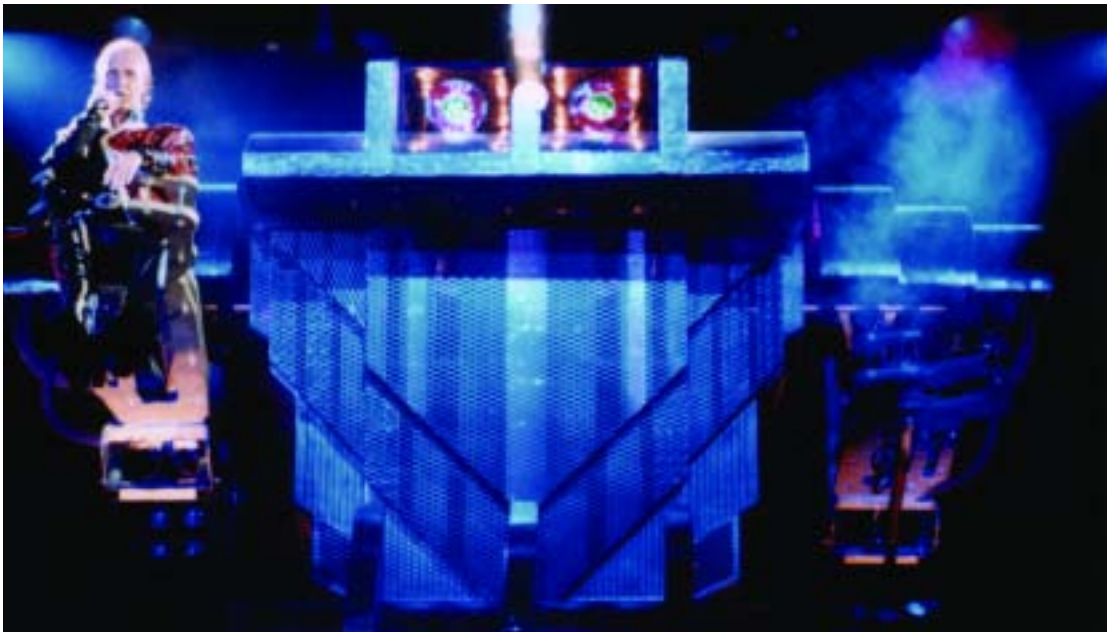
"Everybody comes from a pretty poor background," reflected K.K., candidly charting the journey so far. "When we started playing music, we didn't sing about love, because the band was in a different frame of mind. Everybody had sort of a chip on his shoulder; we wrote songs we thought had more to do with our lives than with love and flowers and all that. Flowers didn't grow in our neighborhood. You think, OK, we've been depressed for so long, writing all this dodgy music for so long . . . our lives are different now, so why shouldn't we go out there and write songs like 'Rock You all Around the World' and 'Wild Nights, Hot & Crazy Days?' Songs that we can play to friends, relatives . . . the builder, the chimney sweep. If it's on the turntable when he walks into your house, he doesn't sort of walk in like this," says K.K. making a sour face. "This is OK, it's our record, and we don't have to take it off . . . we play it at parties!"

And what party would be complete without the aforementioned "Rock You all Around the World"? Except for the ridiculous Scorpions/Spinal Tap title, this one is at least fast. But then there's that ganged and sing-songy chorus, which includes the salvo, "We're gonna rock, we're gonna roll" and a generational prediction of metal might from Rob that sounds like a Pepsi commercial. Damn, the whole lyric sounds like Scorpions meets Saxon, and musically, this could have amusingly fit on the flaccid *Savage Amusement* album. There's nothing rich in Priest heritage about this one. We are indeed in a happy place.



Side two of the original vinyl opens with a lumbering, melodramatic rocker called "Out in the Cold." Those synth guitars bray away as they have for much of the first side. This one's another moody and bitter love song, like (one possible reading of) "Private Property." As with the last two albums, the drum sound on *Turbo* is highly synthetic, in the notorious '80s style. With the airy architecture of this song, the stodgy percussive backbeat really becomes a distraction. Still, there are some nice guitar weaves, as well as a dark break section.

"Wild Nights, Hot & Crazy Days" was of a party metal sort beneath the reputation of the band. Still, it's passable, the verse in possession of a bit more verve (of an AC/DC sort) than the simple and dull chorus. "Hot for Love" is the record's second-to-last track, and this one's a down and dirty rocker, dark, pulsatingly



insistent, the lyric, however, nothing more than another plainspoken man-on-the-prowl sex-capade.

Turbo closes with "Reckless," the album now neatly bracketed with two classics of the Priest catalog. The riff is highly memorable, the rise toward the chorus stirring, Rob's vocal ragged and impassioned. Even as it fits the highly melodic nature of the album as a whole, this one's got a regal quality, as well as one of the band's coolest guitar solos. "Reckless" is a stinging reminder of how good this album could have been. As with Scorpions, the writing of melodic, accessible, radio-friendly songs that were also smart proved hard to manage, but not impossible.

Warner Bros. had agreed that "Reckless" was a good song, expressing interest in using it for the Tom Cruise movie *Top Gun*. The problem was that Warner had wanted an exclusive track, and it was too late in the game to pull it from the album — covers had been printed up already. K.K. now somewhat regrets the move, given that both the movie and the

soundtrack album turned out to be a big hit, with the album selling over five million copies. K.K. chuckles that the band had no idea who Tom Cruise was at the time. The band had suggested to Warner three other tracks for consideration, but those were shot down.

As discussed, there were indeed extra tracks cooked up in the *Turbo* sessions. On the 2001 remaster reissue of *Turbo*, the bonus tracks were a live version of "Locked In" as well as "All Fired Up," a speed metaller curiously lacking in power, perhaps a bit too sanitized, but fairly sophisticated of melody. "It's all stuff we didn't know we had," said Ian, musing o'er the remasters. "When we went looking through the CBS archives for the masters to remaster, we discovered all this stuff. We'd totally forgotten about it." More famous is "Heart of a Lion," namely because Jeff Martin's band Racer X recorded it in '87 for their *Second Heat* album, and again for their live album in '92. Scott Travis was in the band by then, so this is, weirdly, his first recording of a Priest song. "Heart of a Lion" is a standard and somewhat plodding and pedestrian hair-metal rocker — it debuted in demo form (i.e. much less polished than the also unissued "All Fired Up") on the *Metalogy* box set from 2004.

Explains Scott, "Jeff Martin, the singer for Racer X, and Rob, both being residents of Phoenix, had been friends for many years, back when Jeff was in a band called Surgical Steel and Rob would come out and see him. And somehow they became friends, long before I joined Racer X. And I don't know exactly how, but Rob gave Jeff a demo of this song 'Heart of a Lion,' of Priest doing it, and this is a demo, and then I don't know if Rob said, 'Why don't you do it?' or if Jeff asked, and said, 'Hey, can we do this song?' But nonetheless, Rob definitely willingly gave the song to Jeff to listen to or check out, because they weren't going to use it. And that was it, and they just drummed it up one day, figured it out in rehearsal one day and thought, 'Hey, this would be a cool song.' Again, this is just me theorizing. I bet Priest wished they had kept it."

Asked about the rumor that K.K. and Glenn had had no knowledge of the transaction, and that at the time, they were a little ticked off about it, Scott answers diplomatically: "Well, you'd have to ask them. I really don't know other than, obviously, to record anybody's song you have to get permission, and we certainly did, and that's why on the Racer X album it lists those three guys as the songwriters. And I'm sure they get one or two dollars a year in royalties [laughs], so they definitely had to sign off on it at some point, and say 'Yeah, we'll allow this group to do our song.' But how it initially transpired, I don't really know."

"I think that if we had been ashamed of *Turbo*, we would never had released it," said Rob, looking back five years after the experience of creating this contentiously saccharine album so indicative of metal in the mid '80s. "The fact

Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

WE'RE JUST TRYING, LIKE WE'VE ALWAYS DONE, TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT HEAVY METAL ISN'T JUST ONE DIMENSION.

is *Turbo* was a successful album, particularly in America. It's gone platinum, which is over a million copies. You know, bands go through different periods musically and image-wise, and I'm happy that we've been able to do that. Again, coming back to this feeling of not wanting to be repeating yourself over and over again with the clothes, with the music that you play, just trying to have something new to say all the time. . . . We're just trying, like we've always done, to show people that heavy metal isn't just one dimension. It's not just like heavy riffs in A, or heavy riffs in the chord of E. You can take it lots of different ways. So, Judas Priest is 'Turbo Lover,' Judas Priest is 'Freewheel Burning,' Judas Priest is 'Living After Midnight,' Judas Priest is 'Victim of Changes.' We're all of these different bands. I think commercial success isn't really important. I think the solid hardcore following that you have from your fans is the most important thing. Commercial success to me is Guns N' Roses. Commercial success to me is Iron Maiden. That's not Judas Priest! We're an album-orientated band, and with *British Steel*, we had a few singles. That helped us to some extent, but our basic hardcore following is with the records, the LPs. Nothing else. And I'd much rather be in that situation than be in a fashionable, commercial heavy metal band that's famous for ten minutes and then disappears."

"'Turbo Lover,' you watch us play that onstage, and it's great, people love it," adds Glenn. "And I think you have to realize that some things we do are experimental; we've always been a brave band. But then again, you've got to imagine Priest playing those songs onstage. A lot of albums we've done, people are apprehensive. But nearly always, they come back and say, 'You know what, I really like that album.'"

"That's certainly true with *Turbo*," responds Ian. "Because it was so different, it did get a very mixed reception from the press. But it did gather us a lot of new fans as well, and in hindsight now, it's probably a landmark album of ours, just because it was so different. And like Glenn says, a lot of those people who didn't particularly like it to start with are now looking back on it with great fondness."

"We're worried if people like our new album when it first comes out now, because they might go off it," laughs Glenn, adding, "We've always been looking for new angles. I think I can safely state that when you hear a Priest album, it's unmistakably Judas Priest; we've never rested on our laurels, as a lot of bands do. You can do a million albums worldwide by doing the same album with different lyrics, and we've never been like that. That's the easy way out. We've always been brave enough to try some different things and we've suffered for it. People don't always get it straight away, and maybe it isn't always right anyway. But we believe we've got to try. And we just wanted to introduce synth guitar 'round about that time. We thought it would be a unique thing for metal. It was an experiment, it was pushing the

horizons further apart, it was creating more maneuverability for us, or air for us to maneuver in. And at the same time, for other bands. And, you know, certain people came down on us at the time, but even now, as I said, if you hear Priest play 'Turbo Lover' live, it's not a wimp song. It's a very, very heavy song.

"Sometimes you come into criticism and it's justifiable, but I think sometimes people can criticize you a little early on, before they figure out what you're trying to do. We've always been willing to experiment, and that's what *Turbo* was all about: synth guitars. And of course, it wasn't long after that that other bands fell in and did the same thing. So in some way, whether it was right or wrong, it was a little bit innovative. In those days, it was very difficult to use. You had to have a lot of patience. It glitched a lot. Things have come a long way now, but you dealt with the technique on a live basis. If there were any glitches, you could probably get away with them, as long as you got the general feel of the song across. But yes, they were a bit of a nightmare."

K.K. rounds out the defense, years down the line. "That was a very successful album for us, worldwide in actual fact. We were actually playing arenas in Europe with that album. Now, you wouldn't think that album really was geared up to the European metal fans. They like it a little harder, especially in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Denmark, Norway. But it was very successful for us."

PRIEST . . . LIVE!
(CBS, June '87)

Side 1
Out in the Cold
Heading out to the Highway
Metal Gods
Breaking the Law

Side 2
Love Bites
Some Heads Are Gonna Roll
The Sentinel
Private Property

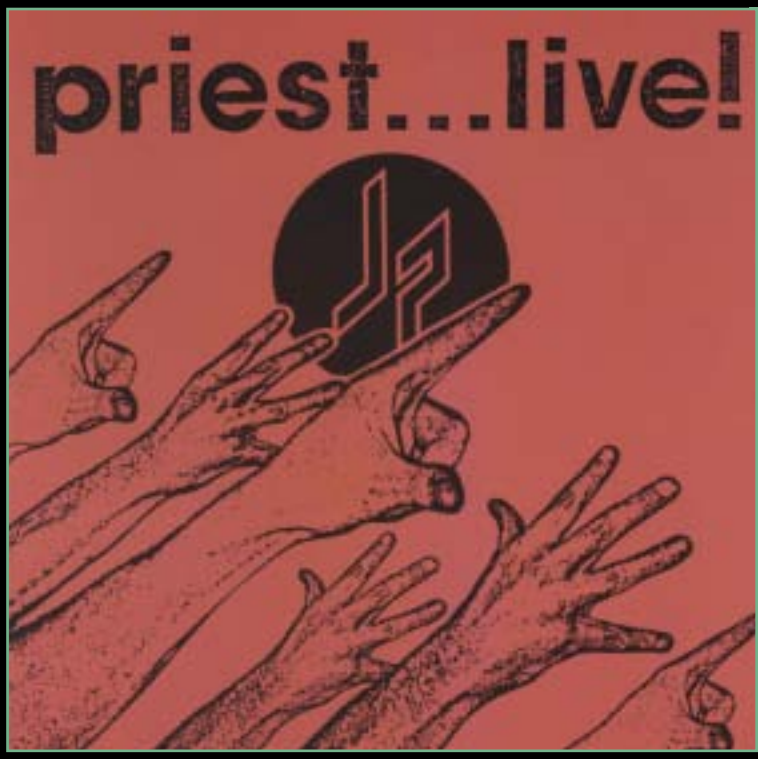
Side 3
Rock You all Around the World
Electric Eye
Turbo Lover
Freewheel Burning

Side 4
Parental Guidance
Living After Midnight
You've Got Another Thing Comin'

13

"WE'LL ALWAYS PLAY TO THAT SAME ONE MILLION PEOPLE"

– Priest . . . Live!



K.K. makes a good point with respect to how Judas Priest more than thrived as a live entity. In later years, Downing was to marvel that, although *Turbo* went gold quickly and then stalled at platinum, Priest were routinely playing to crowds as big as those of bands selling four and five times as many records, reckoning that the fans must be so loyal as to be following the guys around and attending multiple shows, more so than what was happening with Priest's competitors.

THAT'S WHY KIDS COME TO THE CONCERTS, BECAUSE THEY FEEL THAT. JUST TO GET OUT THERE AND THRASH THE SHIT OUT OF THE GUITAR, IT'S BIG!

During press interviews at the time, K.K. also introduced to the world the stately home that would bring him much pleasure in later years as a sanctuary from the wail of heavy metal. "I bought a house 18 months ago in the Severn Valley near Birmingham, which is probably a mistake, because I never ever get there. The floorboards are probably dry-rotted. I bought a Porsche Turbo a year ago, and it's got 800 miles on the clock. So that's rusting away in Greenwich somewhere, but who really cares? This is what's important, to be out here playing."

Added K.K., "As long as we continue to be what we are, and produce what we do, we'll always play to that same one million people, without any hit singles or airplay. And yet, a million people in this country really dig getting off on our music. It's aggressive, and it's a release. That's why kids come to the concerts, because they feel that. Just to get out there and thrash the shit out of the guitar, it's big! It's what you live for, it's every man's dream. It is . . . well, OK, it's not. So some guys want a decent position on Wall Street. My dream is to go out there and see young girls in the audience looking at you and see kids cheering.

You've got the guitar, and it's loud and powerful and it hurts, in the right places. And I think that is probably what it's all about."

All of this very palpable Priest mania was to be captured on *Priest . . . Live!*, released in June of 1987, both as a video and as a double album, wrapped in a monochrome sleeve, black on copper, very basic, but weirdly, arguably . . . pleasing, even if the lone gatefold live shot and two useless and drab inserts offered little in the way of additional eye candy.

At this point, Judas Priest had gone half-heartedly for a hair metal look to match their new songs, hence curly perms, Rob's leaning toward a prissy, fussy mullet. As well, the stage clothes toned down the toughness by adding bits of color here and there.

K.K. said that the band was "obviously looking for something to refresh the image,

because so many bands are starting to look like us that it's starting to scare us, you know? Because they're not recognizing us anymore; they think we're Metallica. We're not going to influence bands that much longer unless we come up with something new to influence them with. So with the album, the cover, the stage set, the stage clothes, everything is what we think will be the next step in what we're known as."

"We feel we've moved beyond that," sniffed Halford with respect to the band's trademark black leather and studs. "There is still plenty of leather and even some studs associated with the band's look, but the black leather look was becoming a bit dated. Also, so many other bands had picked up on that look from us, it was losing its unique identity. We're giving the group a higher profile this time. We want the look to be as modern and as strong as the music. And when you have an album as strong as *Turbo*, coming up with that look has taken a great deal of imagination."

The stage set for the *Turbo* tour, designed by Tom McPhillips, was the band's most elaborate yet, containing, according to one report, 550 computer-programmed lights, 112 speaker cabinets and 26,000 watts of power, administered by 25 full-time crew members. The scene was playing out like Ronnie James Dio and his Dio band's career arc. For Dio, things were pretty crazy for the energetic *Last in Line* tour, and then over the top, silly and unwieldy to the point of bloated in support of the lighter, less successful album, *Sacred Heart*. Priest, on

YOU'VE GOT THE GUITAR, AND IT'S LOUD AND POWERFUL AND IT HURTS, IN THE RIGHT PLACES.

SOMETIMES THERE WERE PROBLEMS. A LARGE ROBOT WOULD ACTUALLY PICK UP KEN AND GLENN. AND ON A COUPLE OF LOCATIONS, THINGS WOULD HAPPEN AND THEY WOULD BE LEFT HANGING UP IN THE AIR.

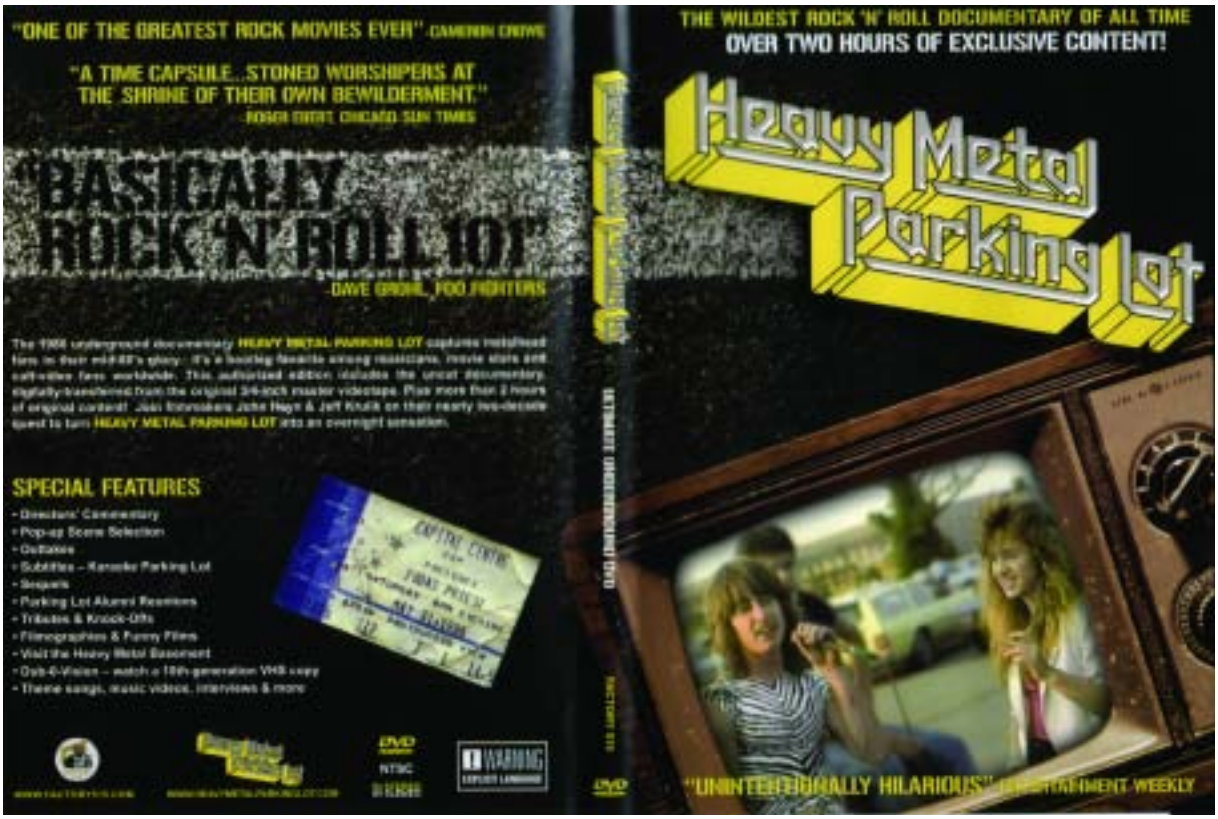
record and on tour, were charting much the same course, from *Defenders* through *Turbo*.

"Yeah, we've had some accidents; it's a dangerous thing to do," mused K.K., adding that the band's new stage partner, a robot he calls "Turbo-something," "gets a bit out of hand sometimes, a bit unruly. It gets a bit tired, too. You've got the claws that lift you up, and there's also a foot thing. If the foot thing doesn't work, you sort of stand there, and next thing you know, it's 'round your neck."

"I can remember that tour vividly," muses Ian. "It was a great production. That was one of the reasons we used the tape [Priest reissued the long out-of-print show as part of the *Electric Eye* DVD in 2003]. We wanted to portray a full Priest production show in all its glory. And that was one of the best tours, with the robot, lights and lasers. Sometimes there were problems. A large robot would come out in the back to the stage, behind the drum riser, and it would actually pick up Ken and Glenn. And on a couple of locations, things would happen and they would be left hanging up in the air. Yeah, there were few hairy moments."

"The mechanical parts were incorporated into other shows," explains Ian, when asked where the robot resides today. "The stuff pertaining to *Turbo* ended up getting scrapped. Some of the stage sets are enormous. You just can't keep them. It would be a waste of time. It's not something you would end up using again; you would scrap them or reuse the scaffolding or whatever."

"I think the Metallian stage show was the most awesome heavy metal stage that was ever put together," continues K.K., referring to the


"ONE OF THE GREATEST ROCK MOVIES EVER" CAMERON CROWE
"A TIME CAPSULE...STONED WORSHIPERS AT THE SHRINE OF THEIR OWN BEWILDERMENT."
ROGER EBERT, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES
"BASICALLY ROCK 'N' ROLL 101"
-DAVE GROHL, FOO FIGHTERS
SPECIAL FEATURES
- Directors' Commentary
- Pop-up Scene Selection
- Outtakes
- Subtitles – Karaoke Parking Lot
- Sequels
- Parking Lot Alumni Reunions
- Tributes & Knock-Offs
- Filmographies & Funny Films
- Visit the Heavy Metal Basement
- Dub-O-Vision – watch a 10th-generation VHS copy
- Theme songs, music videos, interviews & more
THE WILDEST ROCK 'N' ROLL DOCUMENTARY OF ALL TIME
OVER TWO HOURS OF EXCLUSIVE CONTENT!
Heavy Metal Parking Lot
"UNINTENTIONALLY HILARIOUS"

set previous to *Turbo*, for *Defenders*. "But it was very evil and eerie. This new guy is a friendly monster; he's cool. The Metallian was not really friendly. He just stood there and sneered at us all night."

The only live date Priest played in 1985 was Bob Geldof's *Live Aid* behemoth. Rob looked extra cool in high-class black shades, very blond hair and full leather on a hot sunny day. This is where Rob got to meet Joan Baez, the writer of "Diamonds and Rust," Baez fully aware of Priest's version and thanking Rob for coming up with it.

The *Turbo* tour, dubbed *Fuel for Life*, got underway in May of '86 in the American Southwest, with Dokken as support. As mentioned, the staging was a bit of a chore, but so was other technology the band had put to use, including drum triggers and the accursed guitar synths, which kept malfunctioning. Early in the tour, in Landover, Maryland, the legendary *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* documentary was shot, the film consisting of all egregious manner of Priest fans liquoring up for the big show that night, proclaiming their undying allegiance to the metal gods.

An amusing moment was the *Kerrang!*-fueled rumor that Dave Holland wasn't playing the drums. Given the tricky drum-triggering equipment, the band had brought along Legs Diamond's Jonathan Valen to help sort it out. Tipton had quipped that Valen fancied himself a bit of a star and had even gone as far as wearing stage clothes and giving an interview.

Dion DeTora

The tour continued through the States in June and into Canada in July of '86. Krokus was now supporting, as the band crossed back into America in August.

"I was always so happy to tour with Priest, because we were so respected by the lads," recalls Krokus lead singer Marc Storace. "And I even played tennis with them — K.K. and Glenn — and our tour manager did too. It was fun being with the Priest, because they were always saying, 'Are you happy with everything? Anything you need?' Really nice. Compared to . . . well, I won't mention anybody. We had an audience that appreciated both bands, and that's very important when you have a package together. We also toured with them on *Screaming for Vengeance*, but with this second tour, my dad had died. I was quite melancholic before the *Change of Address* release, and they were really nice. I remember them being very soothing to my soul. Rob was somehow not as much around as the other guys. But when we were recording the album *Headhunter*, we were in Orlando, Florida, and we had their producer, Tom Allom, in the control room, and Rob turned up and did some backing vocals with me — I believe it was 'Screaming in the Night' and 'Ready to Burn.'"

As regards working with Allom, Storace talks about much of what aided the Priest in achieving success, beginning with the Allom-fueled rethink of the band on *British Steel*. "He tried not to bring them in too much, to kind of separate Krokus from Priest. He wouldn't play the Priest thing on us, like, 'Hey, when I work with Priest, I do it this way, so let's do it this way too.' He was very neutral with us. But I

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

noticed always, in the back of his mind, he was thinking of the fans. That was his first priority. He understood very well the metal and the rock 'n' roll mentality. He would say, 'Let's keep it simple, let's keep it straight, let's keep it rock 'n' roll — hey, think of the fans.' He would even resort to some jokes and so on, about some of those fans that get extreme with their alcohol and drugs. But there again, he liked raising his glass [laughs]."

"Rob is an absolute screamer, whereas I had to work on it, build it up," muses Storace, when asked about Halford's place in metal history. "Great attitude, great image, 'Breaking the Law,' 'Screaming for Vengeance,' the whole thing, the Harley Davidson onstage, the leather and studs . . . it's like the consummate heavy metal image. And I think no one beats that. Rob is Rob, and that's it. He carries out the performance really well, and he's a really nice guy at the bottom of it, too, as a human being. As far as I'm concerned, he's 100 percent genuine."

Eighty-odd shows completed, Judas Priest crossed the pond to Europe, Warlock (Doro Pesch's Priest- and Accept-like act) in support from September through October, before hitting Japan and Hawaii in December. And as discussed, a slice of this life can be heard on *Priest . . . Live!*, which was recorded over two dates, Atlanta and Dallas, in June of '86. Like *Turbo*, this one was also recorded on Sony Digital. Unfortunately, contrary to the band's plan, no previously unreleased Judas Priest songs were to be found on the final product. And also unfortunately, the album doesn't live up to the fire-breathing standard of *Unleashed in the East*, one of the greatest live albums of all

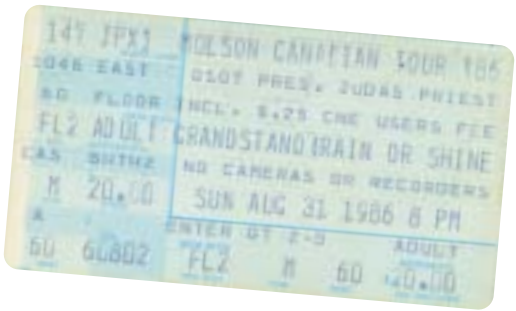
THE WHOLE THING, THE HARLEY DAVIDSON ONSTAGE, THE LEATHER AND STUDS . . . IT'S LIKE THE CONSUMMATE HEAVY METAL IMAGE. AND I THINK NO ONE BEATS THAT.

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

time. As *Exit . . . Stage Left* is to *All the World's a Stage*, and as *Extraterrestrial Live* is to *On Your Feet or on Your Knees*, *Priest . . . Live!* is the work of a band that has satisfied many of its goals, playing to yet another huge anonymous throng, whereas *Unleashed in the East* is a hungry record made by road-frazzled carnivores still slaking a ravenous rock 'n' roll thirst.

Still, be glad that a second live Priest album happened. So many of these songs — "Out in the Cold," "Private Property, "Rock You all Around the World, "Parental Guidance" and even to some extent, "Love Bites" and "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" would make rare appearances in a live setting. And it's also kind of nifty that the album offered zero overlap with the track list from *Unleashed* — indeed, the oldest songs on the album hail from *British Steel*, with a live version of "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" launched as a single. The album is fairly punchy though, with some interesting quirks. "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" actually grooves (this live drum sound, although not superlative, kills that of the *Defenders* album). There are also strange background vocals in places: "Private Property" emanates enthusiasm (although those "hands off!" crowd chants are a bit suspect), and "Metal Gods" includes a few fleetingly different chords and vocal melodies. The 2001 remaster of the album offered three bonus live tracks in "Screaming for Vengeance," "Hell Bent for Leather" (which breaks the cut-off rule) and another live rarity in "Rock Hard Ride Free."



"I didn't really like the second live Priest record," concurs Halford, offering a sentiment pretty much universal with fans of the band. "There was something about it that didn't quite hit the mark. It just doesn't quite get to the goalpost. But I agree about *Unleashed in the East*; that's an extraordinary moment. *Unleashed* will always remain in its own little world, which is what it should do."

Priest . . . Live! didn't even manage gold at the time (it was certified at that level in 2001 — the video went gold in '88), and its U.K. chart placement at #47 (#38 in the States) demonstrated that this most definitely wasn't the golden beholden live record days of the late '70s that spawned such hits as *Alive!*, *Frampton Comes Alive*, *Live and Dangerous* and *Strangers in the Night*. Times had changed, the music business seemed more about business than music, and Priest most definitely weren't doing themselves any favors with expensive haircuts and pop music in their metal to match.

RAM IT DOWN

(CBS, May '88)

Side 1

Ram it Down
Heavy Metal
Love Zone
Come and Get It
Hard as Iron

Side 2

Blood Red Skies
I'm a Rocker
Johnny B. Goode
Love You to Death
Monsters of Rock

14

"PNEUMATIC FINGERS AND LASER RAYS"

– Ram it Down

The nadir of the Priest story, besides the debate over the Ripper years records, has got to be *Ram it Down*. I don't know what it is about this record, but the fact that the guys went back to rocking out fast and furious after *Turbo* sort of backfired. Unlike the enthusiastic response to *Screaming for Vengeance* after the light-in-the-loafers *Point of Entry* spread, here Halford wailing away at the high end over howling riffs aplenty was met with indifference. It looked like Priest were panicking, rehashing, reliving past glories. Singing songs about heavy metal called "Heavy Metal" just wasn't going to cut it, given the fireworks of the thriving thrash movement at the time, and given fresh and artistic heavy sounds beginning to emerge from Seattle.

Reushe/Retna Ltd

Ram it Down was recorded at Puk Studios in Denmark in the dead of winter (the band dubbed it Ice Station Zebra), and was issued on May 17, 1988, just short of a year after another "who cares" record from Priest, the browned-out live album. A certain bloat seemed to have set in, one that began with the mechanized production values of *Defenders*, worked its way through the gleeful sellout of *Turbo*, then the unnecessary live album, and now this. Dave Holland himself admitted that he hadn't even played on the album.

K.K. won't completely confirm Holland's remark, but he has conceded that there isn't "much" of Holland on the album. "Yeah, I guess we did sequence a lot of the drum work on *Ram it Down*, for whatever reason. Maybe as a band, you just go through certain fads, and I think we all had a go on the keyboards — 'Oh that sounds great; let me have a go!' [laughs]. And I think guitar players always want to be drummers, and obviously, it's the drummer's worst nightmare if you've got all these drum machines to play around with, and try all these patterns. Now it probably stands out like a sore thumb, but in those days, I think we thought that we got away with it [laughs]. But the thing is, it just brought about this kind of energy, and I think the band was actually looking at a time, when I think about it, to move on from the basic rock movement where you just lay down the beat in simpler but heavy, solid fashion. I mean, it wasn't the reason Dave left. He left through his own personal circumstances and

reasons, but then we did get Scott Travis in, who could do more. He had the double-kick drum set and he could play really fast, and so that gave us the ability to create stuff with higher energy."

People still cared to some extent about what was left of the Priest and its reputation: the new album quickly went gold, and the band's inexplicable "Johnny B. Goode" single, a wholesale overhaul of the Chuck Berry classic, built on request for the movie *Johnny Be Good*, at least hit the lower rungs of the charts in the U.K. (but not in the U.S.). The album rose to #24 in the U.K. and #31 in the U.S., roughly reversing the success of *Turbo*, that record's bubblegum melodies not surprisingly faring better in an AOR-happy America than in the U.K. Press on the band was thin on the ground though, and it seemed very much like Priest were seen as also-rans. *Ram it Down* sold in spite of itself.

Before *Ram it Down* was issued, but after it was recorded, the band dabbled a bit in the pop world by getting together with the S/A/W production team (Mike Stock, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman), a hot mixing team of pop hits at the time with connections to Priest from the Gull Records days. The band actually recorded two S/A/W songs, "You Keep Giving Me the Runaround" and "I Will Return," along with a Motown cover, "You Are Everything," but the sound was so contentiously pop (apparently the band fell about laughing when they heard the final mixes), that the label actually asked that the songs not be commercially issued.

I THINK GUITAR PLAYERS ALWAYS WANT TO BE DRUMMERS, AND OBVIOUSLY, IT'S THE DRUMMER'S WORST NIGHTMARE IF YOU'VE GOT ALL THESE DRUM MACHINES TO PLAY AROUND WITH.

Said Rob, at the time, "We split up the studio jobs — they respected us as songwriters and it was an interesting idea. Unfortunately, I think, those songs have nothing to do with

THAT COULD MAKE AN IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE TO THE BAND; WE'VE GOT TO SORT OUR PRIORITIES OUT.

Ram it Down. I don't know if we are going to have a S/A/W offering by year's end. Another thing we realized is that the stuff made with S/A/W could be a smash hit on the radio, but I think the people's response would be that we only made this to make hit singles. But we've got a lot more things to do than thinking about a few hit singles in the charts. That could make an irreversible damage to the band; we've got to sort our priorities out."

Back to the world of metal, *Ram it Down*'s cover art was, on the surface, quite cool, but ultimately unsatisfying. Priest were simply giving us more juvenile illustration in primary colors, the artiness of a *Sad Wings*, *Sin After Sin* or *Stained Class* but a distant memory.

Ram it Down opened with the racing title track, Halford's intro scream and the quick-to-pounce riff so evidently trying to please the old faction, but coming up bald and obvious in the process. Stamped out like "Screaming for Vengeance" or "Freewheel Burning," this one's effect is diminished because we know all the tricks. The fact that, lyrically, it's another tired fist-pump to the gods of heavy metal doesn't help matters, nor does the panicked drum track, Holland giving you a sense that he's operating at the edge of his capability, and it ain't enough. Still, the track is a harsh foil to the flirtatious riffs of *Turbo* — Priest was gamely trying to rock harder than the young bucks coming up. The stated plan was to make a heavy record, and a base was established, given that this track and "Monsters of Rock" (the band, again, lapsing into formula, knew they wanted a "plodder" on the record), were a couple of the heavy carryovers from the rejected half of the proposed double album version of *Turbo*.

Of note, there was indeed a surfeit of songs submitted to the label while considering

whether to make the album or not. In the end, tracks like "Red, White & Blue," "Fire Burns Below," "Thunder Road" (there was some crossover between this pedestrian blue collar rocker and "Johnny B. Goode"), and an epic called "My Design" didn't make the cut. Others were reworked, chopped and changed, and then deemed acceptable. "Ram it Down" and "Monsters of Rock" are widely accepted as having been written during the *Turbo* sessions, but "Hard as Iron" and "Love You to Death" are thought to originate there as well.

Countered Glenn, years later, "This is something that's one of those things people talk about that isn't exactly true, where they say *Ram it Down* was a leftovers album. That's not true. Whether there was one or two tracks . . . maybe. But in actual fact, there were a lot of tracks on *Ram it Down* that were written for *Ram it Down* and not leftovers from *Turbo*. That's my recollection of it. But I have got the worst memory in the world!"

Things slow right down for *Ram it Down*'s second track, preambled by a very unmusical intro by Glenn which recalls the jabs leveled at Poison's C.C. Deville for his earsplitting caterwauls. "Heavy Metal" is actually a pretty uplifting track, due to Halford's madman vocal and madder melody. This is most definitely a plodder, but not as plodding as album closer "Monsters of Rock." The mechanized drum track is almost Mack-like in its Queen-ness, this time all of these '80s tricks used to good advantage. Still, a second song in a row about heavy metal, by a band that wore the heavy metal uniform by the rulebook and was one of the few big bands to proudly call themselves heavy metal . . . it was a bit much.

"Love Zone" also features an oddly appropriate hammering drum sound — as previously suggested, it is said that on parts of the album, Holland is actually replaced by a drum machine. Again, Halford is way up the register, but mixed a bit back. This one's got a bit of an innovative structure, and serves as a nice bridge back to *Turbo*. It's heavy, but shafts of melodic light peek through, especially come

IT TELLS A ROBOT STORY WITH PNEUMATIC FINGERS AND LASER RAYS. IT'S A METALLIC FANTASY, AT WHICH PRIEST ARE THE BEST.

its sturdy hair-band chorus. "Come and Get it" is less of a success, though a more squarely heavy metal song. "Hard as Iron" is a jackhammer of a speed metal highball, a preview of things to come on *Painkiller*. Priest's celebrated ability to inject melody into fast technical structures lives and breathes here. Rob's vocal is less histrionic and more palatable. Although synth guitars were largely set aside for *Ram it Down*, the guitars still sound oddly mechanical, more so when buttressed by the obvious drum trickery. Ian Hill's signal was merely another bit of processing deep inside an album loaded up with technology.

Over to side two of the original vinyl, Priest dealt their *Turbo* moment, "Blood Red Skies" being a sort of moody, dark, at times balladic rocker with measured use of dynamics and spacing. "'Blood Red Skies' will be a really unique track," said Rob back in '88. "It has all the dark and light construction elements that are all different characters of metal; peculiarities that are in 'Victim of Changes.' It begins in a weird way, with some atmospheric drum effects, and it tells a robot story with pneumatic fingers and laser rays. It's a metallic fantasy, at which Priest are the best."

"I'm a Rocker" didn't do the band any favors, its chorus horrible, although the verse

melody is kind of fresh, and Rob's autobiographical lyric somewhat convincing when delivered low and steady as it is. Next up was the aforementioned "Johnny B. Goode," which really trots out the ol' synth guitars, as well as a "Turbo Lover" drum sound and that song's brisk, mid-paced delivery. The chorus is just too much for an old school Priest fan to take. At least the band skipped out on the intro lick, which K.K. had said they found too cliché. The song was changed radically from the Chuck Berry boogie original, becoming a rote hair-band anthem. The band filmed a video for it in an Amsterdam club. In perhaps a metaphor for this heavy yet annoyingly corporate album, Priest retained the big hairdos from the *Turbo* days, yet donned costumes that were a little meaner, more black, less red. A second version of the video was also cut, interspersing footage from the crap teen movie it was made for. The

song was done before the rest of the album, sort of on break time, as a favor to manager Bill Curbishley, who had ties to the film business and thought this would be a good idea. Rob has said that there weren't plans to put it on the album, but then rationalized that rock's roots are in '50s music, so 'ere's an homage. K.K. was to quip that the ruse did nothing for the band's career.

"Love You to Death" comes next, the band in a strange but somewhat novel funk metal zone akin to commercial Scorpions or hair metal–era Alice Cooper. And then *Ram it Down* closes with "Monsters of Rock," easily the worst dirge the band has ever written. The rote story of heavy metal is set to an agonizingly slow but processed beat, riffs practically nonexistent as K.K. and Glenn bang away at big Spinal Tap chords whilst Rob does his best scary Orson Welles o'ertop. The opening reference to "the black country" refers to the birthplace of heavy metal, Birmingham, or more accurately, an area just to the northwest of Birmingham, turned black because of all the metal industry in the area. There's that metal, and of course the fact that heavy metal's originators Black Sabbath hail from Birmingham, along with Priest. Amusingly, Rob has talked about Birmingham being a leather work capital as well. Coming full circle, Sabbath's Geezer Butler talks about having stage trousers fashioned from old leather car seats recycled from the plants in which family members worked.

Moltram/RP/Retna Ltd

Add to this the smell of the rubber factories, and you've got Judas Priest live hitting you on all the senses.

"It's something in the air," muses Rob, about his Brummie roots. "In my last years of school I had to walk past this metal foundry, and every day I got a lung full of this molten metal smoke and the shit that would coat your face. This was when I was 13, 14, 15 years of age. That was before I even discovered metal music. I've always wondered if that was part of the seed. I must've sucked in some molten metal at some point, because from that point on, it was a cell in my system that's never gone away. I used to sit in class trying to study, and I could actually hear the stamping of the metal foundry across the street. The 'thud thud thud' would actually come through the windows, and that's kind of a nice thing to think about in the whole story of the life and times of a Metal God."

Fans pretty much considered *Ram it Down* the pooch of the Priest catalog with Rob, but Halford himself doesn't like to get drawn into any sort of admissions thereof. "Well, no, I don't really think that question's important and I'll tell you why. Because everything has its place and everything is relevant, and when you've been as lucky as I have to be a part of something as great as Priest, it's a chronological history of ups and downs and ins and outs and ripples and tides. You look at some of it and you suck out through your teeth some time, but that's OK, that's how it should be, that's real. That's the human aspect of it. So if you're looking at the history of Priest or AC/DC or Aerosmith or Iron Maiden, you look at it and you say, 'Oh that was a great album, and that was a bit dodgy and this one is fucking awesome.' And so it should be; that's making it human and real. I think if there was a situation

where you had . . . there isn't one, is there? Even the Beatles, if you look at it you go, 'That record was a bit weird.' That's what I love about what we do. It's human and it's got all the idiosyncrasies and the strangeness of life in the music and it's all relevant to your writing skills at that particular point in time, or how good you were feeling or how good you could play that day. All these things are wonderful when they're captured on tape and made into albums. It's all important, it's all useful, it's all valuable."

Which brings us to the band's *Ram it Down* campaign, dubbed the *Mercenaries of Metal* tour. Making the rounds, Priest played half the songs from the album, with "Hard as Iron," "Love Zone," "Love You to Death," "Monsters of Rock" and "Blood Red Skies" left off the set list, although the creeping intro to "Blood Red Skies" was played through the PA before the band tore into "Electric Eye" instead, with Rob descending from a steel cage. Only "Turbo Lover" survived from the preceding record. The set played up Birmingham's steel factory ambience. There were metal stairs, railings and cables, and all told, the effect was a tie-in to "Monsters of Rock," "Heavy Metal" and the title track from the album at hand, this idea of all metal, all the time, a sort of full-on capitulation to the band's image.

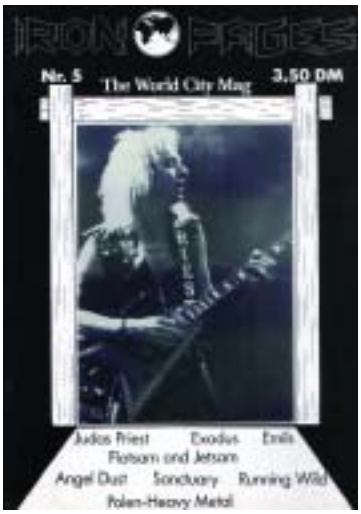
In May and June of '88, Priest blanketed Europe, with Cinderella as support, the British dates in the second half of June being Priest's first there in four years. Cinderella followed the band into Canada and America in July, through to the end of the tour, October 23rd in Portland, Oregon.

However, a month earlier in Reno, Nevada, on September 30, the band were handed a subpoena to appear in court. The band and its label had been sued for $6.2 million by the families of two teenage boys who, nearly five years earlier, had formed a suicide pact. The boys had been Priest fans, and the suit claimed that subliminal backmasked messages in "Better by You, Better than Me" (ironically a Spooky Tooth cover not written by the band) had caused the tragic chain of events, where one of the two had successfully committed suicide, and the other had shot his jaw off and was severely disfigured. Three years later, he too was dead, from a methadone overdose, mistakenly administered.

The story went as follows. On December 23, 1985, drinking beer and smoking pot, one of the boys had given the other his early Christmas present, a copy of *Stained Class*. After agreeing on their suicide pact, the boys had wedged a two-by-four under the bedroom door, trashed everything in the room but the stereo (even attempting to destroy the walls), then crawled out the window, taking a twelve-gauge shotgun with them. In the courtyard of a nearby church, one of the boys put the gun under his chin and killed himself. With blood

everywhere and the gun quite slippery, the second boy missed when the gun lurched, only severely injuring himself.

The family would have preferred to sue over the less outlandish claim that the actual front-way 'round lyrics of songs like "Heroes End" and "Beyond the Realms of Death" were responsible for the tragedy, but these words were protected under the First Amendment. Instead, six teens were hired to interpret the album's lyrics, a "specialist" (Rob said he was actually a marine biologist, suggesting he should be looking after Flipper) was hired to



find backmasked lyrics, and people came out of the woodwork to find hidden meaning behind the cover art of the album itself, with a rumor being floated that the word "suicide" could be seen on early pressings of the album, but had been surreptitiously removed on later pressings.

At the suggestion of Tipton, the defense took their own copy of *Stained Class*, played it backward and found their own subliminal suggestions, namely "Hey ma, my chair's broken," "Help me keep a job," and "Give me a peppermint." Rob remembers the last one slightly different, finding within "Exciter," "I asked her for a peppermint / I asked her to get me one."

At any rate, the summons had to be served in the state where the suit was brought, so here was Priest, getting ready to hit the stage in Nevada, being handed a summons. The whole matter was seen as frivolous at the time, but it would soon turn into the biggest trial of its sort in history, essentially, heavy metal put on trial

for all the world to see, with Priest prevailing after the grueling four-week trial. Deemed a circus-like atmosphere, highlights included one of the lawyers showing up in the deceased's suit, as well as members of the prosecution team, during recesses, asking the band for autographs for their kids.

Back on the tour trail, Cinderella's presence was starkly contrasted by Priest's other touring partners, Slayer. "Yes, we played with them in '88 on *Ram it Down*," affirms Slayer guitarist Kerry King, calling it his first time getting to know the guys. "We bailed their tour out, because the fucking geniuses that they were, they thought that they could take out Cinderella and do some crossover gigs, and the tour was just bombing. So we picked up the

last 13 shows [laughs], hoping they would take us out on the next record — they never did. Priest was a big influence on Slayer, bigger than Maiden, for sure. Actually, the first time I got turned on to Maiden, they were opening for Priest on the *Point of Entry* tour. And then I thought Maiden kicked their teeth in, so I went out and bought all the Iron Maiden records the next day [laughs]."

"I didn't really have an outlet," says Kerry, asked about the first time he had heard the band. "I didn't have friends that were into metal, so it was pretty much just being on the radio. Back then in L.A., there was KLOS and KNET and they were both playing heavy rock. So the first one I probably heard was 'Breaking the Law' or 'Living After Midnight,' and I liked that. And then you go and buy *British Steel*, and it's got 'Rapid Fire' and 'Steeler' on it, and it's like . . . wow! These are better than the songs they're playing on the radio, and then you go do your homework — *Hell Bent for Leather*, *Stained Class*, *Sad Wings* — and then you become a knowledgeable fan."

"We played with Priest again on '04's Ozzfest," continues Kerry. "In '88, I was such a fan I couldn't even talk to them, but in '04, I had gotten over it. I'm still into them, but I've been around the world a hell of a lot of times myself, so I would run into them at bars, and then take Glenn and K.K. home drunk, have my way with them [laughs]."

PAINKILLER

(CBS, September '90)

Side 1

Painkiller
Hell Patrol
All Guns Blazing
Leather Rebel
Metal Meltdown

Side 2

Night Crawler
Between the Hammer & the Anvil
A Touch of Evil
Battle Hymn
One Shot at Glory

15

"THERE YOU GO"

– Painkiller

Through a flurry of alchemical hissing and spitting, Priest emerged for the new decade with a record that was sharp, shocking, uncompromisingly heavy, but formidably, ambitiously crafted at the same time. *Painkiller* would be more like the *Ram it Down* killer, graphically making that record seem egregiously phoned-in. From the cover art down through the production, this one's new drummer and tension-filled songs making for a stinging rebuke of what came before.

WHEN WE GOT SCOTT IN THE BAND, WE FELT WE WERE BACK IN GEAR.

Painkiller's cover art would be any perceptive punter's first indication that this time Priest were serious. Mark Wilkinson, of Fish and Iron Maiden fame, was brought back after his work with the band for *Ram it Down* to bring to life a concept created by the band itself. But this time, the clarity and the color and the detail were as vital as the music within. Priest's talismanic symbol was pictured amidst a demolished city, while a metal figure on a motorcycle flew above the ruins, fist raised in metal triumph. The included "missive" this time out would declare, "As mankind hurled itself forever downwards into the bottomless pit of eternal chaos, the remnants of civilization screamed out for salvation — redemption roared across the burning sky . . . the Painkiller!"

Rob has said that the cover is essentially a representation of the *Sad Wings of Destiny* figure projected into the future, or more accurately, "in Robocop mode." He had wanted to retain the wings, but add the band's celebrated prop, the motorcycle. And then that too had to get a futuristic makeover. Wilkinson came up with the idea of the figure being machine and the bike being animal matter — essentially a dragon with bikey bits added. Glenn joked that as with many of the band's graphic characters, you can't tell whether it's designed as a force for good or for evil, but you do know that you don't want to upset it.

On the music front, two significant changes would occur in the Priest camp, as the boys circled the wagons pointedly, ready to compete with younger, heavier bands. Dave Holland, the band's simple and dependable drummer would have to go, as would the band's simple and dependable producer, Tom Allom. In the first instance, Holland would be replaced by a technical drum wizard by the name of Scott Travis.

Scott had arrived in the Priest camp from the flashy and purposefully shredding Racer X, who had recorded "Heart of a Lion," a song written by none other than Halford, Tipton and Downing. "To be honest, a lot of the time we worked around Dave Holland's weaknesses," points out Tipton, on making the change. "I don't say that in a nasty way. It's just . . . the double kick pedal of Priest has always been a big part of our sound. So when we got Scott in the band, we felt we were back in gear, and that led to tracks like 'Painkiller' — we were back on solid ground." Scott was raised in Norfolk, Virginia, but had been ensconced in L.A. for a while, before Racer X, having gotten involved with Hawk, project band of guitar instructor Doug Marks. Scott had actually half-heartedly tried to join Priest all the way back in 1982. He had approached Glenn at the hotel they were staying at, asked for an autograph and surreptitiously showed Tipton a photo of his drum kit. But asking Glenn how he liked playing with Dave Holland seemed to backfire on him, and that was the end of that.

"I'm an old Rush fan," says Scott, musing on his old favorites and his relationship with Priest before winding up in their midst, after the band had auditioned three finalist drummers in a converted sugar mill in Spain! "But I couldn't even tell you the names of their last three albums, or any songs from them. But you

go back to early Rush that I liked, and of course Zeppelin, they're so cutting edge, they were always creative. I don't know how you could describe it. And Priest, the early stuff is so amazing. You're looking at the album cover going, 'Man, these guys are really . . .' and I've heard the stories now, all of them writing together in a bread van, doing a freezing cold tour around England, with of course no money whatsoever, and having to sleep in the van with the equipment, while one of the guys drove the van, of course. It's just kind of neat when you hear those old stories. And then there's the story about K.K. brushing his teeth in the snow. And it's funny, he probably did that once in his whole lifetime and it becomes a story. But yes, *Painkiller* is a good record — I listened to it a few months ago when we were trying to pick some songs. And I was saying, man, we should do this, and we should do 'Hell Patrol' live — it would just be a lot of fun to play. It sounds great on the record."

Scott found himself impressed with how the band could raise the ante so deep into their career. "Right, and that's the beauty of it. You get a bunch of money and you get your big

A FAN DOING AN ALBUM OF ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE BANDS IS A GREAT COMBINATION, BECAUSE YOU WANT TO MAKE IT LIKE YOU WANT TO HEAR IT AS A FAN, AND IT CAME OUT LIKE THAT.

houses and then you get your cars and your boats and all that, and sometimes the creativity just goes out the window, because you're thinking about other things. I mean, Metallica would probably be the prime example. I'm sure a lot of Metallica fans can't stand some of the newer stuff they come up with."

In addition to Scott propelling the band, virtually waking them up to new possibilities seeded in his drumming, Priest acquired the legendary Chris Tsangarides to produce their bold statement for a new decade (recall also that Chris played a minor role in the production of *Sad Wings of Destiny*). Tsangarides had recorded landmark albums for the likes of Anvil, Thin Lizzy, Y&T and Tygers of Pan Tang in the past, and now he had another venerable '80s metal legend to shake down. Part of the decision also fell to the fact that Allom had decided to dedicate his time to helping former Judas Priest manager Mike Dolan get a record label off the ground, something he quickly regretted from a financial standpoint.

"My sound is big, loud, heavy, and clear," says Tsangarides. "I like to think that every band I work with, we get an individual sound for them, but fundamentally we still hear me through it, but not to the point of distracting from the band. The whole point of everything is that the production should be invisible. You should hear the band and say, 'Shit, the band sounds fucking great,' and then you find out what's gone on and who's done it, etc. Lips from Anvil is a good example; he says to me, he knows [when] I've done something, because the guitars have this roar to it [laughs]. There you go."

"I guess *Painkiller* was a very pivotal album for many, many people — them, myself, and the whole heavy metal genre in general," muses Chris. "Not that anyone knew at the time what it would mean to a hell of a lot of fans, but still, to this day, people ask me about it: 'How did you record it; how did you get it like that?' There's no trickery involved. What you do is play. There are no computers, none of that, because it wasn't around when we did it [laughs]. They basically wrote an album that was going to be as fast and as furious as could be, and they had some terrific tunes and some exceptional playing. And the whole key to it was the fact that they used Scott Travis for the first time, who is absolutely exceptional, and could play the parts that were required, plus changing over to people like myself who was always a huge fan of the guys, and I had been playing them since I was 17 years old. And basically, a fan doing an album of one of your favorite bands is a great combination, because you want to make it like you want to hear it as a fan, and it came out like that. Yeah, we're very proud of it."

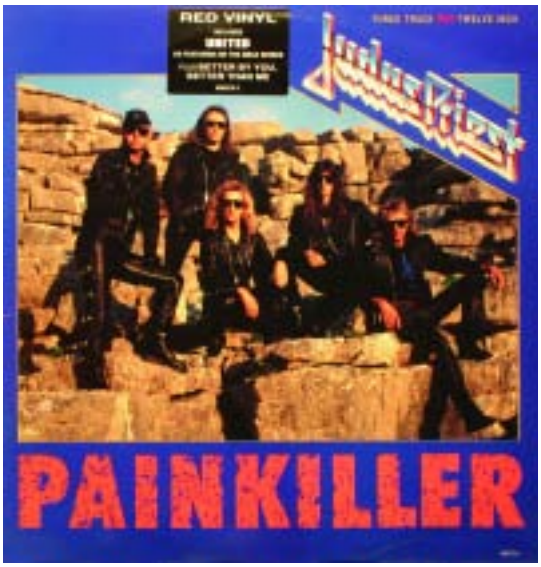
No question Tsangarides sharpened the blade. *Ram it Down* was the work of a tired band desperate to beat their chests, but

sounding fatigued in the process, with Tom Allom as producer not doing them any favors. Indeed, the band had claimed it was time to listen to the type of hard rock consumer who wanted his metal fast and loud, maybe a little more toward the style churned by new guard rockers such as Sepultura, Anthrax, Megadeth and Pantera. K.K. even mentioned the fear of looking pretentious, Rob the fear of being seen as "boring old farts," positing that what *Painkiller* would be is a mix of the current thrash and speed styles with Priest's time-honored penchant for good songs. For his part, Tipton seemed to want to remind metalheads that Priest had indeed invented this stuff.

"I think they wanted to get away from the machine quality that they used before," says Chris, diplomatically, of previous Priest albums. "They tended to use guitars straight into the set and machines on the drums and stuff like that, and they wanted to get back to the band situation where everyone could play together. And that's kind of what we did, because they managed to get a drummer like Scott. They were looking for a bit of a change. If you work with the same people for years and years, and as successful as it might be, they think, 'You know what? It might be just nice to do something with someone else.' I tend to work with bands on a repeat basis, where I will go back and work with them later in life; it's kind of a natural thing to do. But no, no arguments or anything; they were very respectful of each other. It was very good fun, that album, although they did have that very nasty court case looming up which put a bit of a downer on it. But no arguments I recall, between anybody. Which is fantastic."

Tsangarides is also old school in that he can play as well as twiddle knobs. He's passable on both keyboards and guitar, and can write as

well. "All of those things, yes. I can write the damn thing from start to finish, if it's required. I have a hell of a lot to do with the arrangement, and every aspect of the sound. I engineer it myself, always. Completely, all-encompassing, whatever is required. I mean, if the band has a great song, and it's a great arrangement, I'm not going to change it. If it's great, it's great. There are always suggestions, but I'm not ever going to dictate to someone. If it's a good suggestion, it will fly. I listen to what's going on, but I won't be a dictator. Priest were quite prepared — we had demos. They were demos that Glenn had made, with drum machines, because Scott wasn't with



them at the time when the songs were written. So yeah, drum machines and a couple of guitars and a basic vocal, and we started with that. When I heard them, I said, 'You're going to find a drummer to play that fast?! Get the fuck out of town!' And he says, 'Oh well, we've got one.' And I said, 'Let me hear him,' and to me, Scott was amazing."

Scott indicates that Tsangarides wasn't the least bit overbearing. "No, I don't think so at all. Any producer/engineer — whatever you want to call it — they always know their boundaries, and that working with the band is a personal relationship. It's not just a hierarchy. Even if the band chooses the high road, so to speak, making demands . . . it can't be like that. It has to be a mutual: 'Hey, let's all work together to achieve the same goal.' But no, Chris is not a demanding person at all."

The album would be recorded in rural France on the outskirts of Nice at Studio Miraval, owned by famous French jazz pianist Jacques Loussier, partly to escape the glare of the trial back in Nevada, partly to get the usual escape from distraction. Acts who have used the facility include Pink Floyd, Sade, Sting, the Cranberries and AC/DC. The band's memories of their time there include gambling at the local casino, lots of good wine given the locale in wine country, and wild boar attacks in the vineyard.

Painkiller, issued September 3, 1990, opens with a flurry of drums that has become one of the band's top-recorded drum performances. After a lurching heave of guitar, a surgically steely riff kicks in — this would be Priest's heaviest song in years, maybe ever. "Well, there you go," laughs Hill, asked about the potency of this landmark title track. "That's a progression from 'Screaming for Vengeance,' 'Freewheel Burning,' right up until we stopped there

[laughs]. That was the end of the line for the big, fast aggressive songs, a great track. Up until that point, it was the hardest thing we had ever done. Rob's performance was great, as it was on the whole album. His voice came across very powerful on 'Painkiller,' much bigger; not that it wasn't before, but there was more presence in his voice."

Still, no question, it is Scott that shines on this screeching album opener, his modern flash indicating a sea change in this band of old saws, a declaration that Priest would not go quietly. And Halford is of like mind on the subject. "*Painkiller*, for me, is as much a drum album as it is like, a guitar album or a vocal album. We made the drums a lead instrument on this record. Without Scott, there's no way *Painkiller* would have been as powerful or as strong. He has the ability to make something very, very exciting, and very explosive with the way he interpreted the songs that we wrote."

"It's always a difficult thing to do," continues Rob, with regard to losing Dave Holland, considered for years by many fans to be the band's weak link. "Dave left the group of his own choice at the end of the *Ram it Down* tour. He was complaining about being very physically burnt-out, really not feeling that he was giving as much as we all give, you know? You gotta give everything when you make your music. And I think Dave would probably be the first to admit that heavy metal was, you know, important to him, but maybe not as important as it is to someone like me, who lives, breathes, drinks, sleeps, eats heavy metal music. So he made a professional and a gentleman decision by leaving the group. It doesn't matter to me that Scott's an American. He could have been Swedish, he could have been French, he could have been from Holland. It's the quality of the work that matters, and he was the best heavy metal drummer we could find." Further prompting Dave to pack it in were the death of his father, and his sister taking seriously ill, not to mention the stress of the ongoing subliminal messages/suicide trial.

YOU'RE GOING TO FIND A DRUMMER TO PLAY THAT FAST?! GET THE FUCK OUT OF TOWN!

Ian's right about "Painkiller" and its lineage. The song is a direct descendant of the OTT or "over the top" proto-speed metal classics Priest routinely notched, thereby contributing to the invention of the form. K.K. and Glenn carve it up on guitars, proving their mastery at balancing flash with songfulness, and Rob turns in a frantic high-register vocal. Indeed, prior to the *Painkiller* sessions, the band had put together a chronological compilation of their 20 fastest tracks, which became the inspiration for *Painkiller*'s increased velocities. And it became even more than that — the guys had a title all picked out, *Fast and Furious*, and were hell-bent on actually putting the album out as a hits package of speedy sorts, maybe even rerecording the songs to bulk them up to mod standard.

Adding to the impact of "Painkiller" was the song's jittery black-and-white video, Rob looking crazed in eyeliner and five o'clock shadow, the band rocking to death all the metal clichés as if their next decade depended on it. Launching this track as a video (it debuted on September 22, four days after the U.S. release of

the album) as a business concept was similar to seeing the uncompromising "Freewheel Burning" as calling card for *Defenders of the Faith* three records earlier. Rob basically figured why not? There were no commercial tracks on the record anyway, so let's hit 'em between the eyes.

Lyrically, "Painkiller" wouldn't do much to add to the intellectual discourse of the band. Indeed, the lyrics on the album as a whole are a bit of a garish, neon-colored letdown. Priest was still locked in their metal cages hollering away about anything that might be heavy to a 13 year old, in this case, "a fantastic creature that personifies metal," said Rob, "some kind of crusading metal mercenary." An unused verse to the song shows up in the *Painkiller* tour book, and things aren't greatly improved with this added fleshing out of a tale without much meat.

Next up was another fully robust metal rocker, "Hell Patrol," galloping o'ertop a Scott Travis double bass pattern with roots back to arch adversaries Iron Maiden or others of a New Wave of British Heavy Metal ilk. There's even a simple and syrupy Smith/Murray twin lead to strike one's fancy, although this shortly gets shunted aside for a more upscale and classical Tipton/Downing duel. Rob has called the song one of unity, band and fan forming an "army of rock."

"All Guns Blazing" is even heavier, the band turning in a spirited chug of a groove topped with a simple but effective anthemic chorus. Halford's newly angry and snarling and screeching persona is very much in the house for the album's third straight track, with Tipton and Downing responding with the album's most explosive bout of soloing. "Leather Rebel," which Rob positions as a

sequel of sorts to "Hell Bent for Leather," was another fast-picked, note-dense rocker framed on Scott's double bass drum patter, while "Metal Meltdown" did much the same, Halford turning in huge, high vocals for miles on the verse, a bit of a laughable lyric come chorus time. Of note, Glenn remembers the solo break to this song as one of the last things added to the album, he and K.K. laying it down while the record was being mixed next door. Tipton's favorite *Painkiller* track, "Night Crawler," begins spooky, like a silly Ozzy Osbourne tune, but then transforms into a slamming but comfortable mid-paced chug — again, Tsangarides has turned these axes molten.

"Between the Hammer & the Anvil" is yet another outré metal song title on a record that would be overstuffed with them to the point of tongue in cheek — if Priest was capable of that. A hummable, melodic bit of a respite, this one even features Tsangarides plinking a little guitar. Rob has alluded to the song as being the only one on the record that references the band's legal troubles, with the hammer being the gavel and the anvil standing in for society.

One of the album's key tracks comes next, "A Touch of Evil" carrying within it a touch of hair metal, which isn't surprising given that 1990 was pretty much the zenith of that poofy movement, after a good seven years of the venerable genre enjoying commercial dominance. This is another of Halford's hot love affair songs, and frankly, a bit of a duffer, especially in relation to its status as *Painkiller*'s second — or even first — most famous track, destined to be in the set list for years to come.

Chris Tsangarides gets a writing credit on this one. "I had a tape of it, they heard it, and they asked what it was," explains Tsangarides. "And I said it's a tune I'd done. And they said,

A TOUCH OF EVIL
Judas Priest
8 DE MARZO - Barcelona. Pabellón La Farga (Hospitalet).
9 DE MARZO - San Sebastián. El Velódromo (Anoeta).
10 DE MARZO - Madrid. Palacio de los Deportes.

'Do you mind if we sort of mess around with it?' And I said, 'No, carry on boys!' [laughs]. That's how it became 'A Touch of Evil.' But it had everything on it, although it was an instrumental track, no vocal at all. The riffs were there, and Glenn came up with the chorus line, the chorus itself, and the middle-eight section. I also play some keyboards on it."

"You actually hear Don Airey on that track as well," continues Chris, citing the ex-journeyman/current Deep Purple craftsman. "He played the keyboard parts. But essentially, the guys wanted to make an album with him. They had heard a band that I had worked with in Minneapolis called Slave Raider. They had heard the video on MTV and were very impressed by the sound, especially from the bass end. They had said, 'How on earth did you get the bass like that?' And I said, 'Well, I double-tracked the bass with a Moog synthesizer' [laughs]. So Don played the bass part again, on a synth. So you've got the synth bass that makes it incredibly percussive, thus working with a very fast kick drum." Further technical games occur within the solo section, which includes multi-tracked acoustic guitar parts.

Adds Glenn, "Don came along and he put some backdrops on *Painkiller*, more effects than anything else, because obviously it's a guitar-oriented album. But where we needed dramatic backdrops or we wanted to create a mood, for instance, Don came in and did his bit. And always, even though it's very subtle, they became integral parts of the track. I don't think I've ever met a musician like Don Airey. He can play almost anything you can ask him to play. And he could play it sounding like the original thing — any classic song or keyboard part. He just has an unbelievable memory, and he's pretty much an unbelievable musician."

"Yes, his table tennis playing; he's a great table tennis player," quips K.K., asked about Don's contribution to the process. "Yeah, Don is totally superb, he's brilliant, I love him. And I've got to hand it to him, he's played with Whitesnake, Ozzy, and now he's in Deep Purple. When we get together with him,

because we're the same age, we just go back and talk about musicians from the '60s; quite fun."

Adds Downing with respect to Tsangarides' approach to producing, "Chris actually did a bit of engineering on the second album we ever did, *Sad Wings of Destiny*. Big metal fan, and a big guitar fan. So when we hooked back up with him for *Painkiller*, which was a tremendous success for us, that was really super cool. Chris was an expert with the old gear, if you know what I'm saying. When you had great big 48-, 60-channel, big mixing consoles that you needed an aircraft hangar to get inside [laughs]. He was a genius with all that stuff. But I think now he's into ProTools as well. We had a great time. We were down there in the south of France to start with, and then we moved up to Holland for a change of scenery. But Chris, being a guitar player, he does pick up the guitar and kind of jams along. And that was the cool thing about Chris for me — that he was a guitar player."

Chris' contribution to the album somewhat filled a void, says Rob. "We were going to put a ballad on the album, but there really wasn't any space for it. So the nearest thing we got was 'A Touch of Evil,' which really isn't a real ballad as people expect. It isn't like 'Beyond the Realms of Death' or 'Before the Dawn' or 'Night Comes Down.' It's a really intense backbeat of a solid heavy metal riff. We wanted to make this record very strong, very powerful, with no space for slow, kind of cigarette lighters and mirror ball songs; we didn't want to do that."

The video for "A Touch of Evil," filmed at S.I.R. in New York, was shot on the very same day the aforementioned teen suicide trial was winding up in Reno, with Priest vindicated. Work on the album in general was held back by trial business, recalling the recording of another British classic, *Sabotage*, by Black Sabbath, captured in that album's twin epics "The Writ" and "Megalomania."

WE WANTED TO MAKE THIS RECORD VERY STRONG, VERY POWERFUL, WITH NO SPACE FOR SLOW, KIND OF CIGARETTE LIGHTERS AND MIRROR BALL SONGS.

While "Painkiller" as a single (backed with "United") only rose to a #74 placement on the U.K. singles charts, "A Touch of Evil" backed with "Night Crawler" and fronted with ghoulish, garish artwork, fared a little better at #58. In the U.S., "Between the Hammer & the Anvil" was the song's b-side — the pairing failed to chart, and really, it is only through persistent placement in the band's live set that the song took on any sort of a reputation. In any event, the album took a mere three months to acquire gold status in the States, a bit of a thumbs-up directed at the sharp and shocking new Priest, and on the dark side, somewhat aided and abetted by all the mainstream press with respect to the trial that was flooding TV screens across America. Of note with respect to past sales, in the *Painkiller* press materials, CBS had said that "Priest's 11 albums have sold some nine million copies in North America alone."

Closing out *Painkiller* was a two-fer, an inconsequential bit of Queen-like instrumental

WE DEFENDED HEAVY METAL MUSIC! WE STOOD UP IN COURT AND SAID, 'FUCK YOU! HEAVY METAL IS GREAT!'

called "Battle Hymn," giving way to "One Shot at Glory," an accessible rocker with a bit of *Turbo* charm to it, truly an underrated gem of the Priest catalog. Rob has indicated that this track purposely ends the album on a positive note, that after the mayhem of what comes before, our hero rides off into the sunset, victorious.

All told, *Painkiller* was a hard slap in the face to those who liked their Priest *Turbo*-style. And indeed, as opinions solidified in the coming years, both the band and fans would view the record as the antidote to *Turbo*'s tastes, a bold demonstration that Priest could be counted on for variety and wild mood swings.

Asked whether calling the record *Painkiller* played into the hands of those thinking Priest were trying to capitalize on the unfortunate court case, Rob says, "We never used the publicity to sell the record. I think if we would have done that, I'd be walking around in my three-piece suit that I had to wear in court."

But then there were the advertising taglines, "The Antidote to Annihilation" and "Awesome! Backwards or forwards." "Yeah, absolutely," mused Rob. "That was the idea of the record company. And . . . you're laughing, and that's exactly what you should do! You should react to it with a smile. That's the way we intended it to be. It was like getting that lawyer, who held up *Stained Class* and said, 'I wonder how many more people this has killed.' You know, and

Heavy metal on trial

Ray Belknap and James Vance killed themselves. Their families say subliminal messages on a Judas Priest album drove them to 'do it.'

ON TRIAL: British heavy metal band Judas Priest, in a 1986 photograph, faces a lawsuit in the suicides of two youths. Ray Belknap, top left, died instantly; James Vance died of his injuries.

COVER STORY

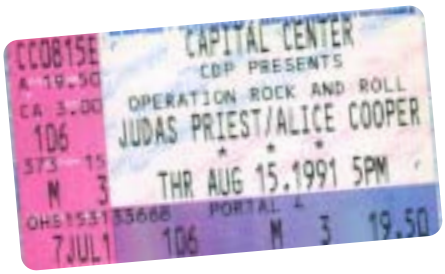
Nevada judge will decide landmark suit

Trial is an 'important, very basic constitutional issue,' says Frank Zappa

By Judy Keen
USA TODAY

slap him across the face and say, 'Well, get this! You know, it's great backwards or forwards!' With any kind of tragedy, and it was a tragedy that two men lost their lives through drug addiction and alcohol abuse and parents that didn't love their kids, to . . . a situation where you could at least smile about it and get on with your life. I'm not going to walk around being depressed for the rest of my life because of Reno. But at the same time, like I said earlier, we didn't gain anything by the Reno situation. We lost about a half a million dollars in legal costs, that we had to pay for, and a lot of terrible things were said about Judas Priest, about heavy metal. We defended heavy metal music! We stood up in court and said, 'Fuck you! Heavy metal is great!' People in court said heavy metal is bad, it's satanic, everybody that listens to Judas Priest is mad, is crazy, is full of drugs, hates the world, is anarchic. If somebody said that to you, you'd be pissed off, too."

Hitting the road after closing the courtroom, Rob emerged fully bald, deciding that given he was losing his hair anyway, he may as well go all the way. He also had said that his "designer metal" phase was over with, meet the new hardcore Rob. The new record featured prominently in the *Painkiller* tour set list, with "Between the Hammer & the Anvil," "Leather Rebel," "Painkiller," "Metal Meltdown" (with drum solo adjunct), "A Touch of Evil," "All Guns Blazing" and "Night Crawler" making the grade at one point or another. It was also nice to see "The Sentinel," "Bloodstone," "Riding on the Wind" and even "Better by You, Better than Me" (a prominent track during the trial) popping up for a hello. Oddly "Breaking the Law" and "Living After Midnight" were not always part of the show, which was presented in two different elaborate chrome-and-steel setups, depending on venue size.



After introducing Scott Travis to Priest as a live entity at a Foundations Forum gig on September 13, 1990, the band kicked the tour off proper on October 18th at the Forum in metal-mad Montreal. In Reno, Nevada, ground zero for their legal battle, the band donated the proceeds of the gig to Community Runaway Youth Services. In tow for the tour was a tough set of modern metal extremists in Megadeth and Testament, again supporting this idea that Priest wanted to compete in a heavier ring. January 23, 1991, found the band playing South America for the first time, namely Rock in Rio II, alongside Guns N' Roses, Megadeth, Sepultura, Queensryche and Faith No More. O'er to Europe, and Priest brought along Pantera and Annihilator, once more a couple of mid-sized acts notably heavier, flashier and faster than the masters they learned from.

"I'm a huge Priest fan," explains Megadeth's Marty Friedman, remembering the tour years later. "So of course when were touring with Priest, I'm plugging the members for all sorts of trivia. 'So tell me about the recording of "Hot Rockin'"' You know what I mean? That kind of detail. And they were more than happy to share that stuff. Very friendly. I used to hangout with K.K. and ask him those kinds of things, and I'm sure he answered them very friendly. There was a very friendly kind of camaraderie, Rob as well. At the time, they had an American drummer, Scott, and he's younger than the rest of the guys, and American, so I saw him as . . . it must be kind of tough to assimilate. Obviously onstage was no problem, but he probably had a hard time. He seemed to be alone a lot of the time. Which I can understand. What do you talk about? The other guys probably have grandkids and stuff. But that's a pro for you. You gotta just jump in any situation and rock it out."

Asked about favorite Priest eras, Friedman points out, "I love *Sin After Sin*, and *Stained Class*. I didn't really like the really early stuff, because the sound was too primitive; I couldn't get into that production, but the songs were great, 'Tyrant' and all that. *Sin After Sin* I just love — 'Dissident Aggressor,' bitchin' song. Even their shitty albums like *Point of Entry* had good stuff. I always stuck up for the Priest when they tried to go commercial [laughs]."

"It was just truly an amazing honor to be a part of that," remembers Pantera drummer Vinnie Paul, with respect to their ride with the Priest. "Me and Dime, that was our one of our favorite bands of all time. When we were kids growing up, there were four bands that we always dreamed of being able to play with, and those were Kiss, Van Halen, Judas Priest and Sabbath. We toured with every one of them, but the first one was Judas Priest. And the way

that whole thing came about is we were actually playing on our first headline club tour, that we did with Pantera in 1990, for *Cowboys from Hell.* We were playing a place called Rock 'n' Roll Heaven in Toronto. Judas Priest happened to be playing the next night, and Rob Halford came down to our show, and he was just blown away, man. He loved the vibe and he got up and sang 'Metal Gods' with us and the whole crowd went crazy. There might have been a whole 89 people there or some shit — it was right at the very beginning. And the next thing you know, he personally asked us to be part of the *Painkiller* tour over in Europe. So we did 58 dates with them all over Europe, and it was just because he handpicked us. And every night, we were like little kids at a concert. We would just sit on the side of the stage and go, 'Can you believe we just opened up for the greatest fucking metal band in the world?' Every night, that was just a dream come true."

"*British Steel* was incredible, but *Screaming for Vengeance* had to be the highlight of it all for me," adds Vinnie, looking at favorites from the catalog. "I thought that was the metal album to just set the standard for all metal albums. The sound was great on it and every song kicked ass. It's one of those CDs that you put in and you just don't wanna touch the CD player. Just let it play, song after song after song . . ."

Asked about his impression of the guys, Vinnie recalls "it was pretty surprising to me that the band and Rob stayed very separate from each other. And none of us really knew why. I think the only time we ever saw them together, besides onstage, was at the end of the tour. They were having a dinner, and I remember one of us said something, 'Hey, how come we don't see you guys together more often?' And I just remember Rob saying, 'This is business.' And shortly thereafter they split up. At the time, all we thought was, 'Judas Priest — all for one, one for all!' We had no idea that there were some internal issues there."

Explaining the Priest set list by the time the band had hit Europe, Rob said that *Painkiller* had provided four tracks. "Yeah, we play 'All Guns Blazing,' 'Painkiller,' 'Night Crawler' and 'A Touch of Evil.' But, you know, when you're playing just under two hours, and you've got

14 albums to choose from, like 150 songs, where do we begin? What are we trying to do? So, we're trying to play songs that we know are the classic cuts. If you play something from *Sad Wings of Destiny*, people usually want 'Victim of Changes' or 'The Ripper,' which we do. Or from *Stained Class* we play the ballad 'Beyond the Realms of Death,' or from *Defenders of the Faith*, 'The Sentinel.' We tried to make a set that had a flow, that had a lot of energy, that really didn't drop too much, apart from 'Beyond the Realms of Death,' where we take a little bit of a rest and then bring it back up again. We're just trying to give something from everything that we've done. But even so, we missed out the *Turbo* and *Ram it Down* albums on this tour."

"It didn't help us at all," said Rob when asked whether the trial had brought the band added publicity. "We haven't sold any more albums. We haven't made any more bigger shows; we just carried on in our steady, confident kind of a way. Some people said that, you know, with ten million dollars, with the free publicity, we'd be a much bigger band. We never believed that! And it's unfortunate now that in America, people that didn't know about Judas Priest, now they understand Judas Priest as being 'the suicide band from England,' and that's a bad thing. But that's the way that the

IN AMERICA, PEOPLE THAT DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT JUDAS PRIEST, NOW THEY UNDERSTAND JUDAS PRIEST AS BEING 'THE SUICIDE BAND FROM ENGLAND,' AND THAT'S A BAD THING.

media communicates in America. So it didn't work that way at all. We just simply carried on the same way. We've just finished a three-month tour of America that was as strong and as powerful as the last three, four, five tours that we've made."

Three shows in Alaska in April preceded a slip across the Pacific to Japan, before the fateful Operation Rock & Roll was to begin in Salt Lake City in July. Operation Rock & Roll was a metal package designed in honor of the troops fighting in Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East. Priest co-headlined with Alice Cooper, supported by Motörhead, Metal Church and Dangerous Toys. As publicity for the package, Rob and Alice rumbled down Sunset Strip one fine morning in a tank.

More than 30 dates had been logged when the operation rolled into Toronto. Pre-show, in a case of logistical miscommunication, Glenn and Rob were ready to start the show, and dry ice was billowing out in standard heavy metal fashion. The stage had been set up in the middle of a field, so the band not only had to get to it via golf carts, but in this instance, from separate sides. K.K., Ian and Scott had not arrived onstage from the dressing rooms yet, so

the crew that was with them gave the signal to lower the stairs in front of the drum riser and start the opening sequence over again. Rob, perched on his motorcycle underneath the drum riser, never got that memo (he and Glenn had arrived from the other side) and he popped the clutch and proceeded to ride out onto the stage. He caught the bottom rung of the ladder square on the nose and was knocked backwards off the bike onto the stage, where he lay unconscious for approximately three minutes.

Meanwhile the band had scrambled into place and were playing "Hell Bent for Leather." Amidst the obfuscating dry ice, while Glenn was musing that Rob's mic must have cut out, he stepped on something leathery and studded, and discovered that it was in fact his lead singer. The crew eventually located Rob on the battlefield, patched up his nose and got him in shape to finish the show, after which he went straight to hospital, where he was treated for a concussion.

As Rob would quip, not only was he knocked off his motorcycle, he would be knocked right out of the band, leaving in a flurry of faxes and other forms of remote communication and confusion, the odd phone call, but mostly communiqués through lawyers.

"I broke my nose and I never put it back," recalls Rob with a laugh. "So when I scratch my nose, that's like my permanent memory. I just bent the cartilage out of shape. Yes, it was Spinal Tap. The first and only time that 'Hell Bent for Leather' was ever performed without a singer."

"That was as good a time as any for me," says Rob when asked about leaving the Priesthood. "I think that was the final nail in the coffin. Being on tours and doing things you think you shouldn't be involved with all play on the psyche. You deal with it the best you can. Sometimes people are banging heads together. I guess good things come out of those circumstances. It was a strange thing that happened, because it was a very reactionary, immediate kind of situation that I felt about that whole show. When I went back to the hotel, after spending three hours in the hospital with X rays and all that kind of shit, I did a lot of thinking. I went back to England the next day and then to Phoenix. Actually I'm grateful to Toronto — it knocked some sense into me."

Said K.K., two years hence, "We haven't seen him since August '91, when he had the accident with the bike. I haven't seen him since I came offstage that gig. I went to the hospital to see if he was still there after the show. He had already left for the hotel, and the last conversation I had

Jay Blakesberg

was when I called him up to see if he was OK, and he said he was fine and was just going to get some sleep. That was the last time I saw him."

Continues Rob on his departure, "There's two sides to every story, and you can choose whatever side you will. I can't tie myself down to thinking the way other people think I should. I'm as much of a free spirit as the next person, and that was one of the issues I had with Priest. I just wanted to break away from that kind of condition. I just had the opportunity to go out and do what I wanted to, and if that pisses people off, too fuckin' bad. I mean I can't live my life worrying about what somebody else is thinking about me. What the fuck is that all about? I refuse to live in a kind of system. It's just not me at all. I fuckin' bit my lip, and my tongue, so many times over the past."

I THINK THAT WAS THE FINAL NAIL IN THE COFFIN. BEING ON TOURS AND DOING THINGS YOU THINK YOU SHOULDN'T BE INVOLVED WITH ALL PLAY ON THE PSYCHE. YOU DEAL WITH IT THE BEST YOU CAN.

I JUST HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO OUT AND DO WHAT I WANTED TO, AND IF THAT PISSES PEOPLE OFF, TOO FUCKIN' BAD.

All of the above, as well as fatigue from the Reno trial, and the running of Priest as the huge business it had become, was weighing on Rob to the point where toward the end, he would wind up traveling on his own, requesting different dressing rooms and even different hotels from the rest of the guys.

"I never really listened to them for years and years, and then we did that tour with them," says Lemmy from Motörhead, adding his two cents on Priest and the doomed Operation Rock & Roll tour. "I listened to them a bit more after that, and I got to know Glenn and K.K. and Rob, and they seemed like good geezers. I mean, they broke up after that tour, right? And then they got back together, and I'm glad to see it, because I think they were all kind of swimming upstream, while they were apart, I thought it was a mess. Much better together. But yes, they broke up more like a year after the tour was finished. I think it was understood that they were going to break up when they were on the tour, but they hadn't set a date for it, I don't think. A lot of bitching going on, you know? Birmingham bands seem to be good at that — Black Sabbath, Electric Light Orchestra . . ."

"When Rob left the band in '92," explained K.K. in 1998, shortly after Rob came out of the closet as a gay man, "a lot of people asked us why he left, expecting us to know. A lot of people expect us to know why he left the band. Well, I think any intelligent person, if they thought about it, they wouldn't even bother asking the question. They know. And now it's been confirmed. I don't have to say any more than that, really. It's that simple. The fact that anybody wants that license of freedom, to be who they want to be, to surround themselves with people they want to, after such a long period of time, that's the answer. We can only surmise. We never really got a reason why he left. But his sexuality is of that persuasion, so being surrounded in this heterosexual environment for so long, it's kind of understandable. He probably got to a certain age, 40 years of age, which roughly he was, and said it's time to be with the people I want, who I feel more comfortable with. Simple as that."

Asked whether the guys had spoken to him at all at this point, Ian answered, "No, and it's not for lack of trying either. When he first left the band we all tried to contact him to, among other things, ask him not to, to consider what he's doing. But unfortunately, he had all his calls routed through his manager and we had to deal with him, so we stopped calling. No point." Bidding adieu to Hill and Downing after this post-gig chat, K.K. asked of me, "Next time you see Rob, kick him in the balls for me, will ya?"

In a later chat, Hill characterized Halford's exit as a creative decision, quite plausible, given what eventually came out of Rob's camp. "It was the summer of 1991 and we were on the

NEXT TIME YOU SEE ROB, KICK HIM IN THE BALLS FOR ME, WILL YA?

Operation Rock & Roll tour, and we had been on the road for a long time and we were all feeling a bit jaded. We were ready for a bit of time off and Rob wanted to continue. He came to us and asked if we minded if he did a solo album and we said, 'No, you've got plenty of time to do that.' For one reason or another he was surrounded by psychopaths who were not a worthy stock of people, and they talked him into a solo career. It was a sad day but we have all got over it now."

There's some dispute between Rob and the guys whether the request to do a solo album morphed into the request to have four years off to do a solo album. In any event, by the time Rob had asked to come back, apparently in '93, the band had all but said "too late." Interestingly, Scott Travis, who would join Rob on his new venture, managed to finesse the matter to the point where he was never seriously considered out of the Priest lineup. The hard feelings would be between Rob and the guys, with Scott making it known that he might be away during the "break" but back when Priest refires, going so far as to check in with the guys from time to time to get their blessing and reiterate that he'd indeed show up for work when needed.

"I think it was just a simple situation where he really had some creative ideas that he really wanted to get out," offers Travis, in agreement with Ian's assessment of Rob's flight from Priest. "And they can him, knowing how the band works. This isn't my take on it personally, because I had just joined the band. But he knew the band would do an album/tour and then take 12 to 16 months off to write a new record. And some of the guys had families, some of the guys had other things personally with their lives, homes and things like that, so Rob probably saw the writing on the wall and said, 'These guys are going to take 12, 14, 16 months off.' That gave him time to implement these ideas that he probably had for a long time, in regard to wanting to do a solo record. I was around for some of it, and I'd say the lack of communication would be the clear problem to me. This is going back to 1992, so email was not prevalent. There were literally faxes going back and forth across the ocean. So things were said that probably got out of hand, and things just got worse from there. But you've heard that a million times, the so-called lack of communication, whether it's in life or with business partners . . . it's so true."

WAR OF WORDS
(Sony, September ’93)

Into the Pit
Nailed to the Gun
Life in Black
Immortal Sin
War of Words
Laid to Rest
For All Eternity
Little Crazy
Contortion
Kill It
Vicious
Reality, a New Beginning
Jesus Saves (hidden track)

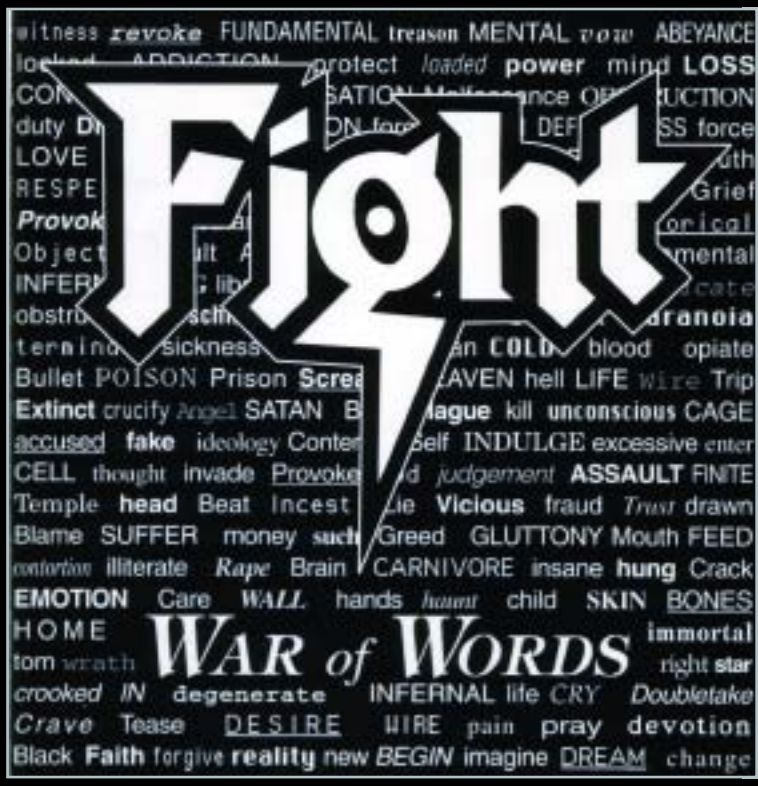
A SMALL DEADLY SPACE
(Sony, April ’95)

I Am Alive
Mouthpiece
Legacy of Hate
Blowout in the Radio Room
Never Again
Small Deadly Space
Gretna Greene
Beneath the Violence
Human Crate
In a World of My Own Making
Psycho Suicide (hidden track)

16

"IF HE TATTOOS THIS WAY, HE'S GOT TO BE A KILLER BASS PLAYER"

– Fight



Judas Priest was dead. At least it sure looked that way. Sure, eventually the band would emerge with a new singer, and then a new album way up into 1997, called *Jugulator*. But in the meantime, once the smoke had cleared from Operation Rock & Roll's final detonations, Priest was reeling.

WHEN I FOUND OUT HE WAS A MUSICIAN . . . IF HE TATTOOS THIS WAY, HE'S GOT TO BE A KILLER BASS PLAYER.

It's tough dealing with the loss of a lead singer, especially one as central as the Metal God. Iron Maiden's been down this road, as has Van Halen, Bad Company and Journey, but frankly, Priest took it as hard or harder than could be expected, limping through the '90s wracked with indecision and inaction, causing all manner of consternation with a fan base that wanted something, anything, to happen. It was a time of rumor: Have they retired? Will they get Rob back? Will their new singer be D.C. Cooper or will it be Ralf Scheepers?

Meanwhile, as Priest listed (and delisted, and short-listed), Rob would be moving on and moving modern, at the same time and in much the same manner as doppelgänger Bruce Dickinson. The Air Raid Siren, having had more than enough of more of the same with Maiden (*Fear of the Dark* . . . let's be honest, it's even less of the same), would go solo with *Balls to Picasso*. The Metal God . . . well, his last album was a corker, a shot on the rocks, a bit of steely determination raging against the dying of the light. Still, *Painkiller* was juvenile, trapped in primary-colored metal imagery . . . frankly, a bit thick. One might conjecture that Rob was viewing the Priest thing, despite the shock rocket up the rear end on the musical backside of things, as a bit old and dowdy, unbecoming of a mature writer.

To his considerable credit, Rob would proceed to spend a goodly amount of time and effort writing lyrics for grown-ups, perhaps for the first time since, ironically, his first half dozen albums with Priest.

So, not a year after his dismissal of (not from) Judas Priest, Halford had a new full-

length record under his belt, *War of Words*. The name of the band was Fight, consisting of Rob, guitarists Russ Parrish and Brian Tilse, bassist John "Jay Jay" Brown (Rob's erstwhile tattoo artist!) and, further hobbling Priest, Scott Travis on drums.

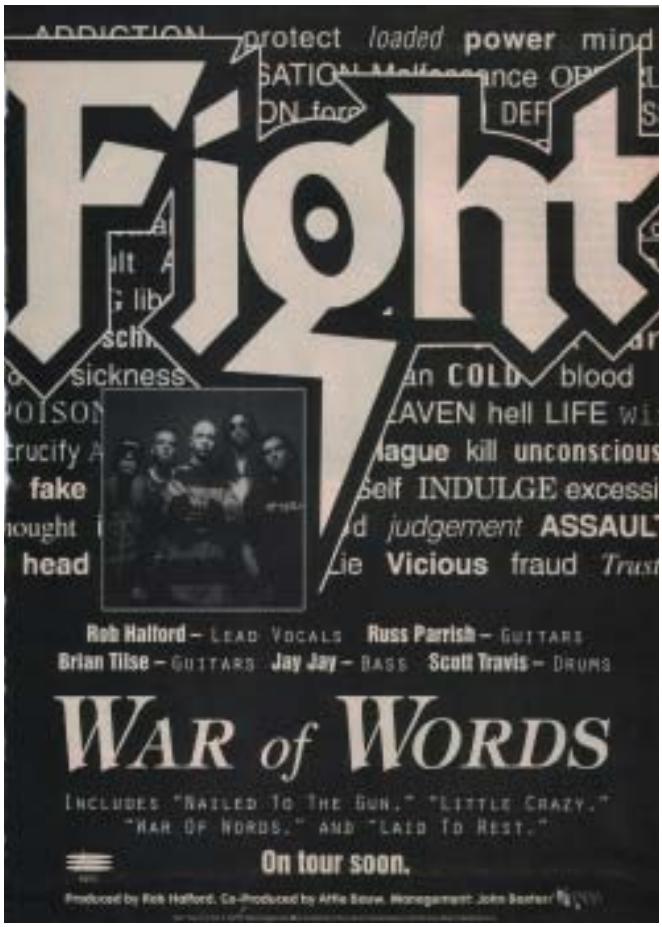
"I feel just great," offered Jay Jay, on the press trail back in '93. "It's amazing working with Rob. Looking back, I first met him up in Toledo, Ohio, during the *Turbo* tour, when this chick was laying out in front of their bus and wouldn't let them leave, to now moving down here with my old band and then meeting Rob. It's just a godsend. I've been playing with the Metal God. I do a lot of his body work. I've done this piece on his legs, the alien holding Rob. I did Predator, and I've done some other work on his arms. It was really weird working with him that way and hooking up with him to be in the band. It worked out really well."

Quipped Rob during the same interview, "When I found out he was a musician . . . if he tattoos this way, he's got to be a killer bass player. Brian was playing with Jay and they just explode. I mean these guys are all over the place like a rash, jumping off the tables and swinging off lights. I said, 'Fuck, these guys are going someplace.' That was before anything solid came about. The band officially formed on July 4, 1992, which I thought was cool, as it's Independence Day down here. It was all coming together, but I thought it was nice to say that day. It's like a big birthday for America, and it's Fight's birthday. I still count myself as an Englishman, and I always will be,

but I choose to live in America for certain reasons. From a cultural sense, I think America is the place to be and to work in this profession. It's tremendously invigorating and inspiring. It's just a great place to be. I consider it as home — when I go away now, I can't wait to get back."

"I'd like to see the first gold and platinum albums to go up on these walls," continued Rob. "There isn't any formula in this business; there's no successful, calculable thing in a band that makes things work. All you can do is try and understand that it's just about being who you are, making the best possible music, hoping that it works and that people get into it. This is Fight; this band is not pretentious. It is just playing from the guts. I think that it's about having a completely open mind. There's no walls or barriers; you're able to interact, develop an understanding of all the ways you can go. For this first Fight record, all the songs were written by myself, simply because it was important to try and let people appreciate how diverse and eclectic the band can be. It's not just a full force thrash thing. It's about understanding there's a tremendous amount of movement available."

Looking back a decade later Rob mused, "It's amazing how that band, for the short tenure that it had, did create such a terrific impact, especially the *War of Words* release. There's just something very pure and raw about that release that hit a lot of people. And it did extremely well here in the States." The album in fact got up to about 225,000 copies sold in the U.S., with manager John Baxter rounding to 400,000 with respect to worldwide figures.


protect loaded power mind
Fight
sickness
an COLD blood
fake
head
judgement ASSAULT
Vicious fraud
Rob Halford – Lead Vocals Russ Parrish – Guitars
Brian Tilse – Guitars Jay Jay – Bass Scott Travis – Drums
WAR of WORDS
Includes "Nailed To The Gun," "Little Crazy," "War Of Words," and "Laid To Rest."
On tour soon.

Indeed *War of Words* has a proud, combative, fresh sensibility to it, the effect reinforced by the scrappy black-and-white cover art. Not as extreme as something from Pantera, it nonetheless possesses that band's fire, crossed, say, with the traditional song sense of *Painkiller,* not to mention a bit of modern Sabbath and grunge in the downtuning of the guitars and rumbling density of the riffs. Halford produced the album himself (coproducer and engineer credit goes to Attie Bauw, engineer on *Painkiller*) and the album

was recorded in the Netherlands. The sound achieved is trebly, immediate, perhaps thin and mechanical with respect to drums, but huge in the guitar department.

"Nailed to the Gun" was the album's most promoted track. A chugging, heavy, but ultimately groovy and simple anthem for those who prefer their Metal Gods a little more hardcore, this one is about paranoia and the resulting gun violence plaguing American cities. "Little Crazy," a lament about being "a puppet on a string," about events being out of one's control, was also promoted as a single, even though it's ultimately quite unattractive, given its lethargic, down-tuned, not all that melodic forward mass. Both tracks got video treatment, as did "Immortal Sin," another somewhat leaden and frumpy straight-line rocker, this one housing a lyric against prejudice.

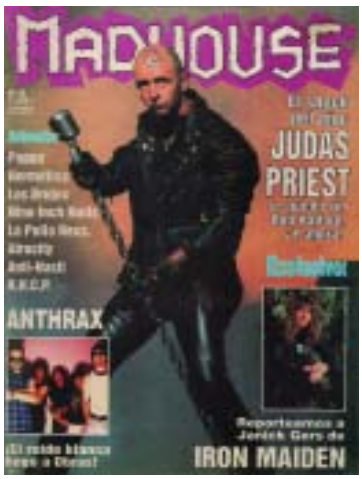
"The song itself talks about the way certain types of relationships, particularly interracial relationships, are viewed by some religious extremists," explained Rob. "That's why it's called 'Immortal Sin.' It's just a perception on those relationships by outsiders. Some of these fundamentalists use the Bible as a

LITTLE CRAZY
1. ALBUM VERSION (3:48) • 2. STRAIGHT JACKET MIX (5:54) *
Produced by Rob Halford
Co-Produced by Attie Rauw
Remixed by Attie Rauw
ROB HALFORD: Vocals/Guitar
RUSS PARRISH: Guitarist/Keyboard/ Backing Vocals
BRIAN TILSE: Guitarist/Keyboard/ Backing Vocals
JAY JAY: Bassist/ Backing Vocals
SCOTT TRAVIS: Percussionist/ Backing Vocals
Management: John Baxter
Fight
FIGHT LITTLE CRAZY

weapon of aggression instead of [as] a book of love." Potentially inflaming religious sensibilities even more, *War of Words* contained a hidden bonus track called "Jesus Saves," in which Jesus actually saves Satan. Interestingly, in discussing the track, Rob calls himself a Christian man.

Commenting on the "Immortal Sin" video, Rob recalls that "we shot it in this old warehouse in downtown Chicago — freezing, freezing cold, well below zero, because when we perform, you can see the steam pouring out of our mouths. We shot from around one in the afternoon until three the following morning, and then we drove overnight to the next venue. We used performance footage for the band, and intercut it with some pieces taken that represent aspects of growing up: one of being in a kindergarten setup, with children around four to six years of age; then we cut to a high school setup, 15, 16 years old. Then we include footage of different types of environments — rich people, poor people, different portions of the city. It's quite a visual

IF YOU'RE ABLE TO REACH OTHER PEOPLE WITH YOUR ART, YOUR CREATIVITY, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF QUITE LUCKY.



statement that the band is making this time. I hope it gives people a different take on the band's potential."

Fight indeed would become Halford's first vehicle for elevating his level of discourse lyrically. It seems it wasn't only Priest's maturing fans that were getting tired of chrome-plated goblins running around being metal. As Rob explained back in '93, "For me, without getting too intellectual, it's about really having something important to say. It's important on a psychological level to really have something valuable to contribute. I think all artists, if they're honest, do that. It's a very kind of selfish thing — you're doing this to get off on what you do. If you're able to reach other people with your art, your creativity, you should consider yourself quite lucky. It is very important to me. I'd like to think that we have something special and unique, and it will make a large contribution to this style of music."

"I'm not muzzled anymore," continues Rob. "I'm able to say what I think about issues people want to hear about. That's been difficult for me in the past. I always wanted to communicate like that lyrically, but with Priest, that never happened. Every single person has something to say about the state of government, state of ecology, state of education, state of medicine, state of hunger. If you don't, you're a pretty fucking cold bastard in this world. It's an important part of society to have feelings and to be able to talk about these subjects. More than ever now, bands are doing it. It all comes down to the basic human requirements. When I sit down and write music now, it's a great feeling. There are no reins holding me back. I was in one band that had a specific way of writing music and saying things, and now I'm in another band that has absolutely no restrictions. It's about things I want to talk about. That's a real good feeling for me, no matter how unpleasant and distasteful it may be."

EVERY SINGLE PERSON HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE STATE OF GOVERNMENT, STATE OF ECOLOGY, STATE OF EDUCATION, STATE OF MEDICINE, STATE OF HUNGER. IF YOU DON'T, YOU'RE A PRETTY FUCKING COLD BASTARD IN THIS WORLD.

Halford was also frustrated about Priest putting the brakes on his modern sensibilities. "I don't think they ever understood what I was trying to do. I think they always thought I was trying to play Simon Says, because I've always wanted to be with what's happening now. And I've always loved the company of things that are happening at this moment. If I started digging this band or that band, or started hanging out with this band or the other band, there'd be this kind of, 'What are you doing that for? This is where you should be. This is what you should be doing.' I lived with that for quite a long time. That was becoming increasingly frustrating for me, having to compromise my musical integrity. In certain bands like Priest,

that's what you have to do. You had to be prepared to offer something and have 20 percent accepted and 80 percent rejected. That's not a very nice thing to have to live through."

"He should've spoken up!" said an exasperated Downing on whether Rob might have been dissatisfied with the music he was making with Priest. "He should have said that at the time, because, when we were sitting down writing and recording *Painkiller*, he was very involved. He thought it was the bee's knees, that it was wonderful. He never said otherwise. If anybody watches the 'Painkiller' video, it ain't gonna get no heavier and meaner than that. I don't think Rob will ever look more aggressive or heavier than he does in that video, and I don't think he'll come up with music that's more intense. Unless he sings about killing the world and tearing everybody's eyes out. If you call that being more heavy and aggressive, then fine, but it's not my cup of tea."

"After Rob said he wanted to do his solo thing, he went ahead and did a lot more than that," continues K.K. "He decided he didn't want our present management company, who've been managing us for 11 years. He didn't want any of those people involved in his new project and that really put the whole band in a strenuous situation. It just went on farther than that. He couldn't get what he wanted from the record company, so he didn't want those guys involved anymore. He just went about to set himself up totally independent of anybody and everybody who's been with us for the past god knows how long. In a sense, he's out there on his own. He doesn't like us anymore for some reason! To start with, Rob was very happy with Columbia.

He thought that they were wonderful. But apparently he went in and played the songs for the heads of Columbia, and they said, 'We don't like the songs.' I suppose that this pissed him off to start with, and it's just gone on from there. We were starting to get a little bit fed up, especially when the three-to-four-year statement came over by fax. When he announced that he had to leave the band in order to secure his record deal, that was the point where I thought this was a load of bullshit, and so did the rest of the world, as far as I know."

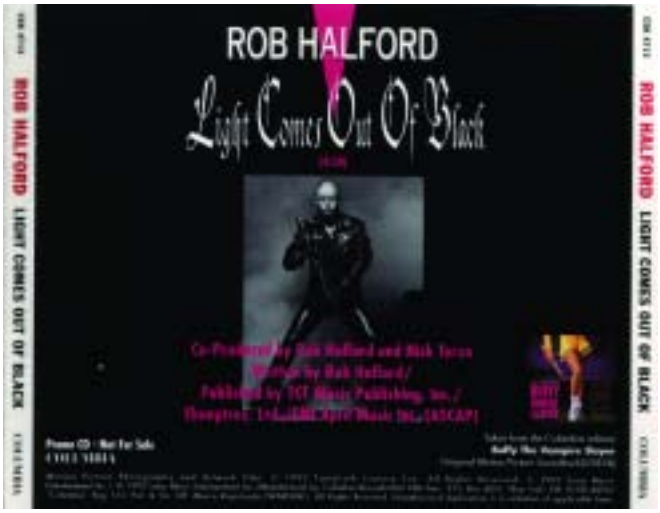
With Halford on the move, and Priest frozen in its tracks, Columbia figured they'd keep the flame alive with a monster Priest retrospective. *Metal Works '73–'93* was issued on April 23, 1993, preceding the release of *War of Words* by five months. The set was comprised of two discs and 32 tracks, only one composition of which was culled from the band's first two albums (and then, in live version), which Priest nemesis Gull Records still owned and do to this day. A video version was also issued, while Mark Wilkinson's cover art for *Metal Works* was an amusing collage drawing on elements from past Priest covers.

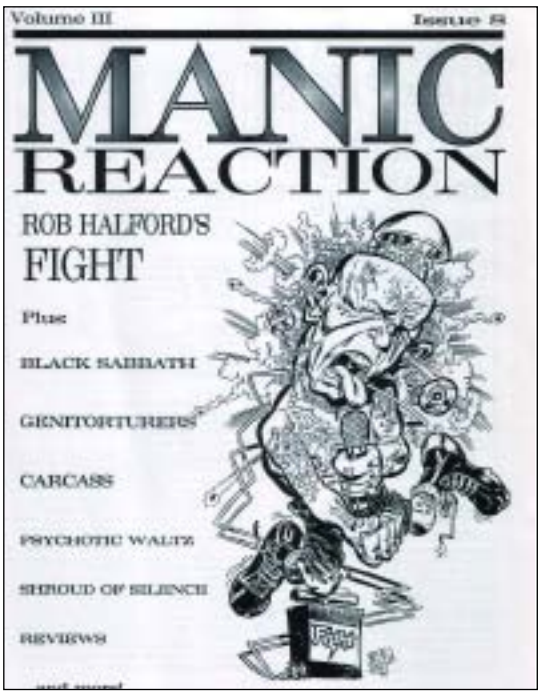
K.K. intimates that this *Metal Works* and Fight jumble could potentially have experienced some synergy, "but it's been one insult all the way down the line. We — Glenn, Ian and myself — took a back seat, just to see what was going to happen next, really. We actually condoned the idea; he had our blessing to set up his own solo project. As you know, we toured very hard for the *Painkiller* album, and prior to that we went through the court case, so we thought we'd take a small sabbatical in '92. We actually did intend to do the *Metal Works* project, so Rob said, 'Hey, it could be a good time to do this solo thing.' I actually thought that if his solo project and *Metal Works* were released at the same time, who knows? Maybe it would have promoted each other, as it were. Obviously Rob hasn't come up with the product and we have, so that isn't the case."

IN A SENSE, HE'S OUT THERE ON HIS OWN. HE DOESN'T LIKE US ANYMORE FOR SOME REASON!

Back in Fight club, visually, Halford was going for a bit of a street punk, almost hip-hop look. As K.K. put it, "Rob likes to wear silly clothes now with a baseball hat turned backwards." More accurately, his T-shirt, tattoos, and shorts and army boots garb mirrored that of Pantera, who were the spark of this direction in general. Rob had dug that band's major label breakthrough album *Cowboys from Hell*, which prompted Priest to use Pantera as support on their European tour. As explained by Vinnie, Rob's first impression was forged in Toronto, when he had switched on MuchMusic, Canada's version of MTV, and saw Dimebag Darrell in a *British Steel* shirt being interviewed, followed by a video from the Pantera album. Rob skipped down to the basement pub Pantera were playing at, Rock 'n' Roll Heaven, and jammed "Metal Gods" with the rocketing upstarts. A lifetime of experience later, after the European tour and the demise of Priest, Rob joined the Texans onstage in California in March of '92 for a round of Priest classics, also recording a studio track with them called "Light Comes out of Black," issued on a soundtrack album in July of that year.

Explains Halford, "Yes, that was on the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* movie soundtrack. At that





time I was with a different label, and they approached me when they were making the soundtrack, to write a song specifically for that film, and I had never done that before so it was an exciting challenge to kind of think about a song that had a vampiresque dark gothic atmosphere. But at the same time, carry a message, and the message is that sometimes light comes out of black. That just reflects on my personality. I've always been very optimistic, that you grow from moments of conflict and struggle. These are the great things of life that are part of living. So that is a strong song and carries that kind of optimistic, constructive message."

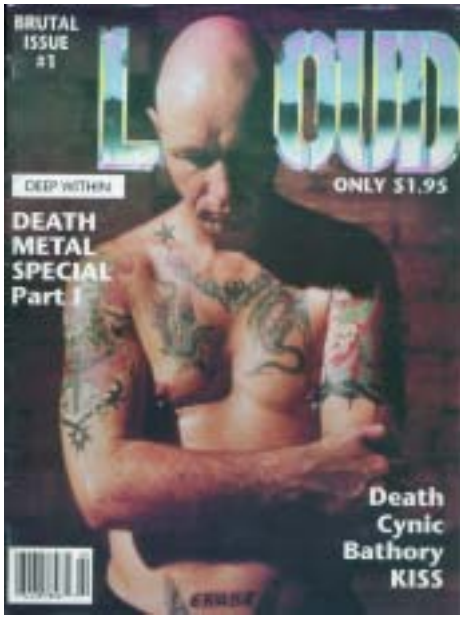
"Light Comes out of Black" was in the set list for the European and U.S. tour Fight embarked upon for *War of Words*, as was pretty much the entire album itself, plus Priest's "Green Manalishi," "Bloodstone," "Freewheel Burning," as well as Black Sabbath's "Symptom of the Universe" and "Sweet Leaf." In Europe, support came from post–Death Angel act The Organization. In America, U.K. doomsters Cathedral got the nod, after getting kicked off the Mercyful Fate tour for making disparaging comments toward King Diamond. On playing Priest tunes, Rob quickly affirmed at the time, "Yeah, we'll play 'em. I wrote all of them with Ken and Glenn. This band will play some of those songs very, very well, but we may chop them up a bit, de-tune them, slow them down, grind 'em and mash 'em around."

On January 14th of '94, Fight did some more mashing, issuing the *Mutations* EP, consisting of four live tracks (including Priest's "Freewheel Burning") and five remixes.

"Attie's doing them," noted Rob, as the disc was in progress. "[Producer Attie Baux is] doing all the remixes. I'm not personally involved in any of them, apart from the stuff that he sends over. He has all of the tapes and we talk about the direction. And we have long conversations over the phone, from his house in Amsterdam, to wherever I may be on the road or back home in Phoenix. We just share input and possibilities and he just sends over four or five versions of each song. It's a really unusual way of doing it. He deserves all the credit. There isn't any legitimate way for me to get over to any given studio while we're on the road and put these together."

Later that year, Rob joined Geezer Butler, Bill Ward, and Wino from The Obsessed for a cover of Black Sabbath's "The Wizard," issued

on the well-received *Nativity in Black* tribute album, to be followed up with a promo-only Fight Christmas single called "Christmas Ride," a fully fleshed-out, all original Christmas tune the band wrote and recorded in two days.



With respect to the Sabbath trip, Rob recalls, "While we were writing the material for the new record, we just took an afternoon off, and me and Brian Tilse jumped into a studio here in Phoenix and put it together really quickly. Nobody was there. We just had the tape sent over. It took me about 30 minutes to get the vocals done and it took Brian maybe an hour to do the guitar. And then we went back into the other room and carried on writing the stuff for the new album."

The tribute track was actually a capper to what was a semi-serious period in which Rob was considered as the new singer for Black Sabbath. It seemed that things were not going so well with Ronnie James Dio and the rest of the Sabs as they toured their reunion album, *Dehumanizer*. Things came to a head at a festival in Costa Mesa, where Dio and the boys were supposed to play, followed by a short headlining set featuring Ozzy with the guys — sans Ronnie of course. Ronnie saw this as transparent pretext to put the original Sabbath lineup back together, and jumped ship. Halford stepped in and performed as lead vocalist for Black Sabbath in November of '92, with eyebrows up all 'round as to the aptness of the match at hand.

In any event, it was not to be, and Fight would live on. In February of '94, Fight hit Australia, Japan and Brazil before backing up Anthrax for another shot at North America, already extensively blanketed in late '93. Into the summer, the band did a dozen or so mostly weekend dates with Metallica, Suicidal Tendencies and Candlebox on a jaunt called the Summer Shit Tour. After having jammed "Rapid Fire" with Anthrax earlier in the year, Rob wound up doing the same with Metallica.

On April 14, 1995, Fight was back with an all-new album called *A Small Deadly Space*, lineup

intact save for Russ Parrish's short-lived replacement Robbie Lochner having been replaced by Minneapolis native Mark Chaussee. Destined to sell only a fraction of the band's debut figures (Soundscans in America totaled 67,253), it is arguably a superior album, more complex, robust, better recorded, more thoughtful.

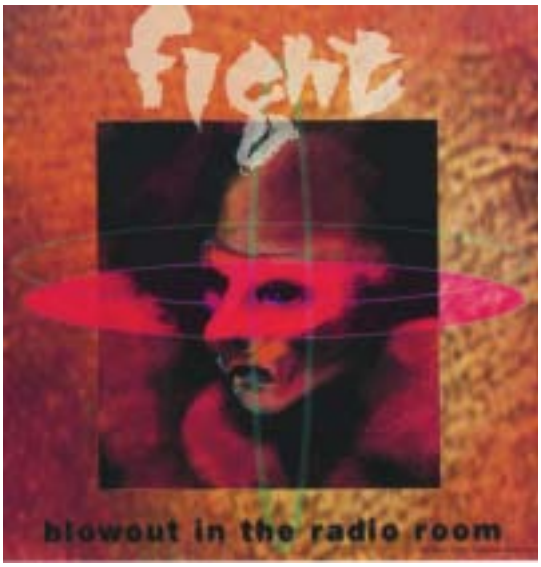
"I've always been a firm believer in trying to get the strength of the melody in any work that I've been part of creating," explained Rob. "I agree 100 percent that *War of Words* certainly has a more stripped-down, hardcore approach as opposed to the more contemporary, and maybe even more sophisticated quality of this record. It took place mostly here in Phoenix in rehearsal rooms. We were just all in the same place together, jamming away and recording everything that we did and putting the meat on the skeleton as far as we could, and then we recorded in Amsterdam.

"It's just a great feeling for the first time to have the chance to play music that we've written together as a complete unit, because all of the *War of Words* material came from myself, so it wasn't a true representation of what Fight could be. Here we are now with a bunch of songs written by the whole band. I think we've probably got more of an identity now. There's definitely a major change in the overall presentation of the band. You can tell on this record how the band has grown and developed in the last couple of years. We started writing it last April or May. We came right off the road and started work. It just felt like the right thing to do rather than experience some dead time. We were all just very pumped from the whole experience of the first release and world tour. We were just raring to go. I think we had a ten-day break — it literally has been nonstop for me since the end of '91."

"Maybe I'm turning into some kind of Lennon-esque activist," mused Rob, surveying the albums' weighty themes. "But we're all victims of violence, to some extent, even though we might not be actively physically involved. It's all about balance, trying to make a perception as an artist. Generally, most artists look at extreme conditions that surround us. A lot of the references on this record talk about domestic violence, or looking at bigotry and prejudice against people with HIV and trying to escape the violence with the direct reference beneath the violence. And yet, you get a kind of poignant glimmer of hope at the end with the song 'In a World of My Own Making.' I don't want to feel as though I'm trying to write myself into this pained Generation X environment, but the fact remains that these kinds of conditions have been prevalent through humankind, right from day one. I don't feel like I'm the tortured artist, but I think it's just one of the most introspective pieces of lyric I've worked on for a long, long time."

One of the album's most impressive and Pantera-esque sequence of riffs is featured on "Legacy of Hate," which Halford says depicts "a moment where this boy is trying to reach his father. He's gone into adulthood, and he's suddenly seeing that the possible reason why he was the victim of such treatment was because his father was also part of this chain of events, which is a pretty realistic portrayal, unfortunately."

The nondescript and somewhat squared-off "Never Again" could have fit on *War of Words*, if not for its Holocaust lyric. "It was an abomination against humankind and should never be forgotten," says Rob of the Final Solution. "It should constantly be part of the school



curriculum. It's an extremely hard-hitting fast lesson to let people see how, when society is weak and looking for a way out of a difficult situation, they reach for something in the form of rhetoric that promises them this, that and the other thing. It's just disguised fascism. And that exists in today's world. We're seeing it right now in Bosnia and other places. Although there isn't a direct reference to the Holocaust, it's a metaphor, and that statement 'never again' is from that terrible part of history."

"It's about a couple that are homeless," says Rob, about "Human Crate." "They don't want to get married because they don't feel that is relevant or important to them. But they need each other, and they have this love for each other. I see it every day when I'm driving around Phoenix. People are just trying to exist to get food and a cheap motel for the family for the night."

A Small Deadly Space coughed up one video track, "Blowout in the Radio Room" being a bit of a languid stoner rocker, its title curiously akin to AC/DC's *Blow up Your Video*. The song served as a metaphor for what was a groovy, sophisticated album with above-par vocal melodies and axe-sourced textures. As stated earlier, one significant difference from the debut was that the band wrote as a team, resulting in an album that was freer, and also more Pantera-esque and grungy at once, with guitars that are egregiously molten and electro-fried. Rob is darker, growling more, screaming harrowingly (and sometimes electronically processed) from a deep pit of guitars, and in essence, turns in a fresh, brave performance in construction of an album that is still today gaining converts among Priest fans.

The proposed world tour for *A Small Deadly Space* was knocked on its head after a month and a half of North American summer dates, as neither ticket nor record sales materialized. Rob did some grousing about the label's commitment to the band, but gamely started writing for a third Fight album — material that would never be presented to the band.

JUGULATOR

(Steamhammer/SPV, October '97)

Jugulator
Blood Stained
Dead Meat
Death Row
Decapitate
Burn in Hell
Brain Dead
Abductors
Bullet Train
Cathedral Spires

17

"*PAINKILLER* TIMES TWO"

– Jugulator

"Disbelief really. When we first saw the videotape, the first thing that Glenn said was, 'This guy has got to be miming!' We had Scott call him up and ask him if he was. A couple of days later, he was over there rehearsing. It all happened in four days."

FROM THAT MOMENT ON, K.K. AND GLENN KEPT CALLING ME RIPPER. IT WAS JUST A NICKNAME. BUT WE'RE GOING TO PUT IT OUT THERE AND SEE IF IT STICKS.

So says Ian Hill, with respect to the mighty mouth who would finally, after years of false starts — and frankly, idle talk — be announced as Judas Priest's new lead singer, one Tim "Ripper" Owens from middle-America Ohio.

As mentioned earlier, two of those touted for the job — and apparently in the final four of about "a thousand" — had been Royal Hunt's D.C. Cooper and Gamma Ray's Ralf Scheepers. "I had prepared myself for the job as vocalist for Judas Priest," affirms Ralf, "because I was one of the guys who was on the shortlist, so I prepared myself for two and a half years. Then the rejection letter came that said they found the new singer, which was a big disappointment for me, so I felt a little bit in the hole actually."

Tim Lachman, brother of Halford guitarist Pat Lachman, was also up for consideration, having even met with the band and assured that he was one of "a couple of dudes" Priest were considering. Other names floated had been Anthony O'Hara, later of Praying Mantis; Shy's Tony Mills, now with TNT; and Jeff Martin, aided by his Racer X connection to the band. Strapping Young Lad's Devin Townsend had been offered an audition, but he turned it down due to the age gap, the fact that his guitar skills wouldn't be required and, well, the foolishness of the whole idea. Sebastian Bach was asked to audition as well, but his manager at the time, Doc McGee, put the brakes on the possibility without even asking Baz. Months later Bach would be out of Skid Row.

Leah Burlington

Pre-Priest, Tim Owens, winner of the gig, yet not even around in the touted final four, was best known for the *Heart of a Killer* album he constructed with Winter's Bane. Simultaneous to that band, he had played in a Priest cover band called British Steel (and also Brainicide, and Damage Inc.), the level of irony

so heavy that a movie, *Rock Star*, was loosely based on his surreal rise. There was even a spell where Winter's Bane had been opening for the cover band.

"The Ripper is just a name that they gave me," offered Tim, by way of introduction, in the summer of 1996. "When I auditioned, I sang 'Victim of Changes' and 'The Ripper,' and from that moment on, K.K. and Glenn kept calling me Ripper. It was just a nickname. But we're going to put it out there and see if it sticks. It's cool and I'll take it. My parents even call me that now!"

Charting past to present, Ripper added that "I got in a Judas Priest tribute band, because as an original band, we couldn't play fuckin' anywhere. We couldn't make any money. It was obvious to cover Priest. They're my idols and I love them to death. I am the psychotic fan! My

THEY'RE MY IDOLS AND

I LOVE THEM TO DEATH.

I AM THE PSYCHOTIC FAN!

Mick Hutson/Redferns

first goal now is to put some awesome material out. The music that's been done so far is pretty damn heavy. I would say it's *Painkiller* times two; they've progressed more. I haven't added much writing yet. I'll have a lot of work to do with the melodies. Glenn wants to give me free rein when it comes to that. We're really looking forward to writing together on the next album. But these guys are the most amazing guys you want to meet. They're just so nice and down-to-earth. I've had so much fun being around them. When I first met them, they seemed so much younger than what I expected. It's their dedication; that's why they've been so successful. They look at everything and they really go at it. With a gleam in their eye and they're fucking ready."

"A lot of people are going to hate me and will be ready to criticize me," continued Tim, with the headbanging understatement of the late '90s. "All they have to do is listen. It probably sounds more like Priest now than if Halford was in the band. He's just done an industrial album! Halford wanted to leave Priest to do his own thing and to this day, I still want to meet the man and thank him for giving me this opportunity. I don't understand what he's doing. Now he's going to join Tony Iommi.

I wish him the best and I'm thankful where I am. *War of Words* was good. I was surprised what happened after that. I just bring young blood, just like Scott Travis did when he came in for *Painkiller*. I'm definitely under more pressure than Scott. Scott was a much different drummer than Dave Holland was. Halford's always been looked up to as one of the most talented singers in that type [of] music ever. Now K.K., Glenn and Ian are putting pressure on me and building me up. What's funny is that I'm ready to take the task. I know I can do it. It's been such an easy thing to deal with. The guy was my favorite singer. I don't know how I'll fill his shoes. I'm not sure what size of shoes he wears! I probably have smaller feet than him. Halford's just waiting to see who replaced him. I know if I was standing in an audience and saw me singing, I'd be happy."

The lead-up to getting Tim involved included literally years of wildfire rumor and conjecture. Every once in a while a story would surface of this guy or that guy catching Priest's eye at some gig, or through a tape, or even an audition.

"There were a whole bunch of people," says Tim. "We don't want to get into any names. There were some decent-sized singers. They just didn't think it fit with the Priest style. My tape was in their hands, and a week later I was in the band. When I went back home, I was afraid to tell anybody for fear they wouldn't believe me.

"My dream was to meet Judas Priest. I think I came aboard for *Screaming for Vengeance*. My brother got *Screaming for Vengeance* and I got another record. It was '83 and I became a fanatic. He played it and I was like . . . I mean Halford changed his voice all the time, different guitar tones, the songs were versatile, you know . . . they're not going back to the old

catalog, *Hell Bent for Leather* and *Sad Wings of Destiny*. I was just blown away. I was just like, 'Wow!' And when I would try to sing it, I was like, this stuff's easy to sing and it was weird.

"I told the guys that I had had a dream that I did a soundcheck with them in Cleveland and I sang 'Victim of Changes.' What's weird is, that's the first song I tried out with. I just got off the plane and I sang that song to a 1988 tape version. They're in the studio looking at me wearing headphones, totally jet-lagged. After I sang it, Glenn walked up to me and said, 'If it's up to me, you're in.' I'm not one to be big-headed about myself in any way. It was probably one thing that helped me get the gig.

I can sing classic Priest songs like 'Dreamer Deceiver,' but my voice can go off in other directions. This is a whole new era. Judas Priest has always gone with the times. They're not going to wear shorts onstage with their hats on backwards. Don't look for us to be head to toe in leather and spikes either."

Says Ripper further, with respect to that first day, "I walked in the door and there's Ian Hill sittin' at this big giant breakfast table and it's like, uh! And [assistant manager] Jayne said, 'Ian, this is Tim,' and I was just like, 'God!' He gets up and walks over to me and I was just like, 'Wow! There's Ian Hill.' The last thing I did was got autographs before I left. I knew I made the band though when I left, and I still got a sheet of paper and got an autograph for my parents more than me, but I was just amazed to walk in and in the background hear guitars and drums — it was just like, 'Oh man!'"

A poignant end to the autograph tale has Ripper adding his name to the sheet with an addendum: "Dreams do come true." Back in Cleveland, picked up at the airport by his

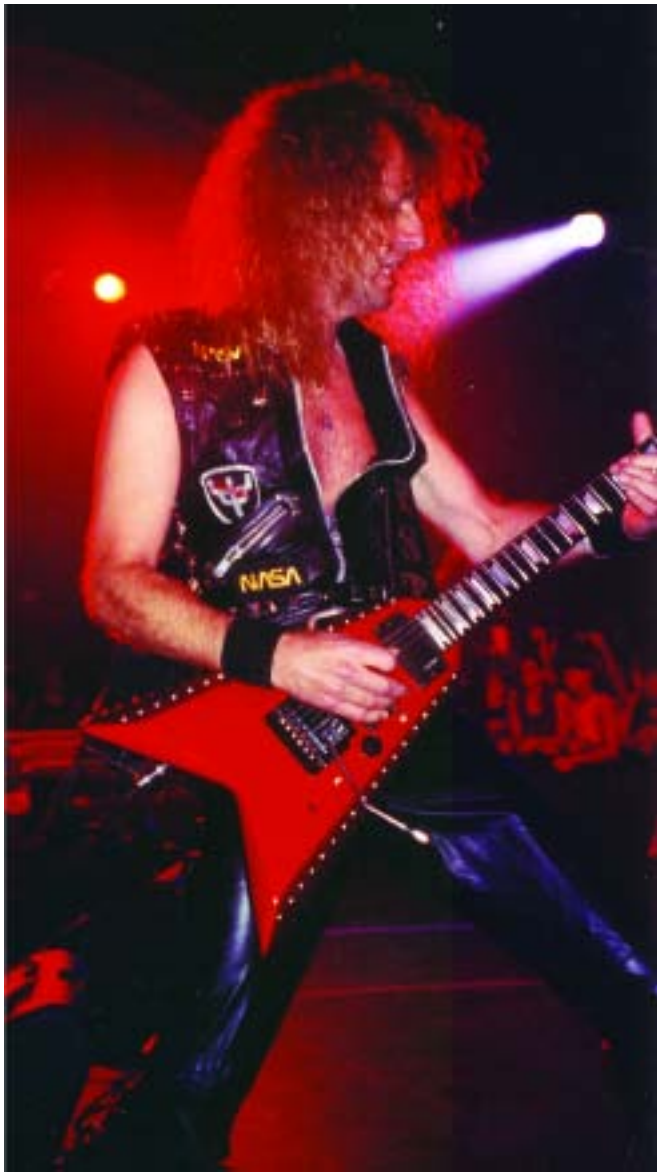
IT'S FAST AND AGGRESSIVE AND IT'S BETTER THAN *PAINKILLER*.

parents, he handed the sheet to them. After being convinced Tim had actually gotten the gig, his mother burst into tears. Later, his dad went and got a Priest tattoo on his bicep!

But back in England, as the story goes, Tim was told to get some sleep, that the band would deal with the audition in the morning. Tim explained that he was too wired to wait, at which time he sung both "Victim of Changes" and "The Ripper." Ripper, as alluded to, hadn't even auditioned for the job. A tape of him playing in a club had made its way from a fan to Scott Travis who forwarded it to the decision-makers. No lead-singer auditions would ever take place, because Ripper had been found just before the process was to fire up, with about 15 names on the list.

Thus began endless chatter around the Ripper-era record that was to come . . . one day. "I've probably enjoyed music more in the last two or three years than I ever have," mused Tipton, a good 15 months before the eventual release of *Jugulator*, Ripper's debut with the band. "It's been hectic for me lately. I've had to put my solo hat on, then my Judas Priest hat, so I haven't had much of a break, going from one project to the other. But I've always been a bit of a workaholic; I welcome it really. I just finished mixing my solo album and everybody's been very patient with me. And we're going to do some fine-tuning with the writing on *Jugulator*, then we're going to get Scott and Owens back over in late August/September and we'll finish the record by October. We're looking towards a late '96 or early '97 release. We can't rush it; we have to make sure that when we deliver this record, it's the best thing we've ever done . . . in our eyes anyway.

"Priest has always evolved. The new album is very '96 but it's *Painkiller*-ish. We've never rested on our laurels — we've always moved



Leah Burlington

and evolved with the times. It's still unmistakably Priest, it's got a lot of character, but more than ever. It's fast and aggressive and it's better than *Painkiller*. It's been weird though, because we've written the album without a singer in mind, which we've always done anyway. We've always put the music together and put the vocal on last. So that's not been a problem for us. But now that Owens has stepped in, we'll

OWENS CAN DEAL WITH ANY PRIEST SONG AND MAKE MINCEMEAT OUT OF IT. I'VE NEVER BEEN SO STUNNED IN ALL MY CAREER.

Leah Burlington

probably collaborate with him and write/rewrite some of the tracks. We still haven't chosen a producer, but it will only be a coproduction basis, because we don't need any help with arrangements or songwriting. It will be a very good engineer or coproducer."

"They won't need persuasion when they hear him," warned Glenn with respect to Ripper. "It's that simple. One guy said to me yesterday, 'Can there really be a Priest without Rob Halford?' I said, 'Come with me,' and I played him one take of 'Victim of Changes' that Owens recorded after getting off the plane. After the first line he said, 'OK, I'm converted.' The guy's that good. Yes, until people hear him, they'll be wary. I guarantee any doubts will be resolved. That's the confidence we've got now. He's a really nice guy too. He's got no problem being a front man. He's just come out of the blue. We've never had much luck in this band; we've had to make our own luck. But this is certainly a turn of events and a twist of fate that went for us. Owens can deal with any Priest song and make mincemeat out of it. I've never been so stunned in all my career."

"I haven't spoken to him in five, six years," said Glenn, about Halford. "There's no bitterness in the air from my point. Good luck to Rob, whatever he wants to do. You only live once. If you choose to do a solo career, then fine. I'm not a bitter person anyway. I just looked towards the future and I'm excited. To be honest with you, I really think the best thing to happen to Judas Priest now was for Rob to leave the band. If someone's heart isn't in the band, then you're going through the motions and you're not really being positive. We've got fresh blood in a guy who is good, if not better than Rob. Rob's a great singer, but we've replaced him now. We've got a guy whose heart and soul is in the band, just like us. It's also

made me search within myself to find my strength. I've been more prolific than ever the last two or three years. I've really found the strengths within me. I've gone out, played with young guys and come out feeling good about it. At the end of the day, I should really say thank you to Rob, because his decision to leave the band has made me get off my ass and find out what's really within me."

Jugulator finally saw the light of day in October of 1997. Mark Wilkinson was once again tapped for the cover art, the full painting of which is more than impressive, one of his best. Unfortunately, only a detail of the painting was used for the cover, and the photograph of this head-and-torso sampling was fuzzy. In any event, another metal monster — the Jugulator — was born of fire and steel (and all that). A new logo, incorporating the band's cross symbol, was also introduced to go along with the all-new situation, which included a drop down the record deal hierarchy in America to CMC/BMG, in conjunction with a "Priest Music" trinity that included SPV in Europe and Zero in Japan.

Once inside the record, fans indeed found, as Ian Hill indicates, an album that was a frenzied re-intensification of all the non-ironic, mashing heavy metalness of the *Painkiller* album. "Well, there's no great outside influences on there. The main thing is that it's been seven years between *Painkiller* and this one, and there's two albums missing there somewhere [laughs]. And we always try to take a step forward with every one. We don't like to rest on our laurels and say right, we've found a formula and stick to it. So we figured we had to take about three steps instead of one, so that was the main thing about doing *Jugulator*."

But there's no mistaking the band had decided to stay current, current meaning *harsh*.

I SHOULD REALLY SAY THANK YOU TO ROB, BECAUSE HIS DECISION TO LEAVE THE BAND HAS MADE ME GET OFF MY ASS AND FIND OUT WHAT'S REALLY WITHIN ME.

"Yeah, several," answers Hill when asked about new bands Priest had been admiring. "Pantera, although they're not a new band anymore, are they? Machine Head, Fear Factory . . . there's a whole string of them."

"There's a lot of new bands creeping up everywhere," adds Ripper, also a factor in keeping the direction of the new Priest young and vital. "I've really been out of the scene. Once I made Priest, I didn't listen to too much other than Priest. We've been into this new album for so long. But I like Sevendust, and in my hometown, Akron, Ohio, there's a band called Spawn that's absolutely terrific. There's Winter's Bane . . . metal's so revived. Of course you have Korn, and the five or ten bands that sound like them — Deftones, Coal Chamber."

Jugulator's title track opens with a cinematic scene from some hell. Quiet but foreboding guitar gives way to heavier washes, a few toms from Scott, and then a slow beat o'er which Ripper growls menacingly. Scott fires off some double bass and we're off to the races into a hardcore take on the over-the-top "Painkiller" premise. "Blood Stained," which was also included on the *Bride of Chucky* soundtrack, is

IT'S UNASHAMEDLY HEAVY METAL MUSIC. WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DO IT OR ADMIT IT.

next, Travis turning in another snare-on-one-and-three rhythm, with K.K. and Glenn responding with military riffs and lyrics to match. Ripper has pronounced this his most complete vocal performance on the album.

"Dead Meat" features the same rhythm yet again, meaning essentially that groove to this point has been sacrificed for a sort of relentless jackhammering, reinforced by the album's steely and stiff self-production, the credit going to K.K., Glenn and Sean Lynch, who had worked with the likes of Sabbath, Gary Numan and Brian May. "Death Row" starts with the same guitar texture as both "Jugulator" and "Blood Stained" but then quickly transforms into the album's best riff, with Ripper revealing himself as versatile, convincing and technically perfect.

Next is "Decapitate," on which the band go for an expansive, languishing Sabbatharian

groove, one quite Fight-like in weight and dour disposition. "Burn in Hell" is more of the same — hard to love, not very melodic, overly spooky and scary heavy metal juvenilia — a little-utilized, live-themed video was shot for this one. "Brain Dead" is also slow, but employs a bit more of an upscale riff, not to mention a more mature theme than much of the rest of the album, but one nonetheless explored fully through Starz' "Pull the Plug" and Metallica's "One." "Abductors" is similarly mechanistic, as is the metronomic "Bullet Train," which was floated as a lead single, perhaps because of its stingy bit of melody come pre-chorus time. The song actually received a Grammy nomination in early '99 for Best Metal Performance.

Closing the album is "Cathedral Spires" (Ripper calls this the toughest song on the album to sing), intro'd with spooky music like many of the others, after which yet another big

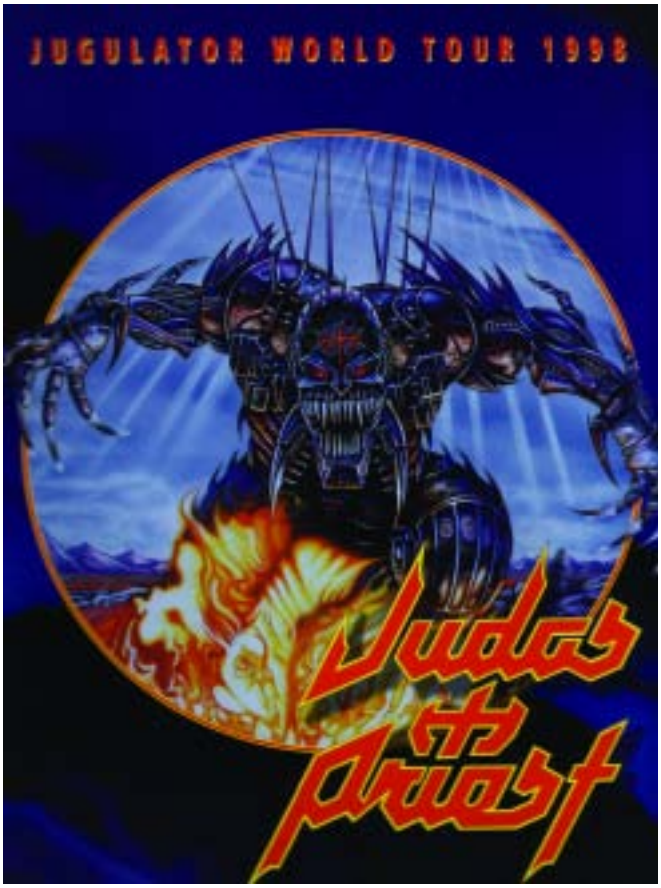
batch of doom takes over, same one-and-three double bass jackhammer . . . it's baffling how similar and simian these songs sounded.

"I think there's a lot in those lyrics that people didn't look into," defended Ripper after hearing some stick about them on the *Jugulator* tour. "'Blood Stained' is obviously a political song, pure politics. 'Decapitate' is about other parts of the world, where if you commit a crime, you are simply decapitated and not sent to jail. 'Brain Dead' is my favorite lyric on the album — it's about a guy laying there looking up and saying, 'Hey wait a minute, I really want to die.' The whole family is around his bed . . . I think people just looked at the titles of songs and drew conclusions. I think *Jugulator* is a damn good album, better than most metal albums these days. I think that it's unashamedly heavy metal music. We're not afraid to do it or admit it. And some people can look at that as also being a negative. But we're not going to call ourselves pop rock. And if someone doesn't like it, fuck 'em."

"It's just how we feel at the moment," defended Glenn, at the suggestion "brutal" might describe the new vibe. "Every Priest album has its own character. *Jugulator* stands on its own merits. We feel brutal at the moment. Every album that we've done has its own mood. There's not a lot of melody out there at the moment, but we've never really worried about anyone else. We just feel between-the-eyes brutal; I think we've got about seven years of pent-up frustration to get out, and we've definitely got something to prove. If you listen to this album, it doesn't sound like anybody else. It's unmistakably Priest. Listen to the intro of 'Burn in Hell,' the screams in 'Bullet Train,' it's raw Judas Priest. There's a high scream at the end of 'Bullet Train.' Have a close listen to it and you think

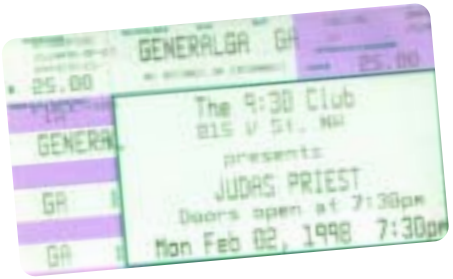
there are two vocals. It's one vocal, no effect. He splits his voice. We were putting the vocals down, looking around the mixing board to see if there was an effect on somewhere. It was Tim's natural voice split into two."

Addressing the currency of *Jugulator*'s sound, Glenn argued that the glamour of heavy metal had been necessarily stripped away, and that the new reality in the scene was more hardcore and earthy, adding "We've always said that we gain inspiration from younger bands, but we never ever imitate anybody. We've always been leaders if you like; in our own inimitable way, we do our own thing. This album, not only does it not sound like anybody else, it's unashamedly metal. There's nobody else out there brave enough to stand



alone and say, 'This is a heavy fucking metal album.' In 1997, people are going, 'We're alternative/death/thrash metal,' thinking they might sell more albums. Well, we've made a brave stand and said, 'This is heavy metal; it isn't dated, it isn't 1987 metal, but it's heavy metal and we do it well and this is the best we can do, like it or leave it.'

"We've always had our ears to the ground; it's not like we think we know it all and '87 metal is going to sell nowadays. You've got to move with the times but keep your own identity — something we've always protected — and you have to evolve. Hopefully our music will appeal to the younger generation. I know it will appeal to the hardened Priest fans, and I know that our music has evolved, but I know it



hasn't changed enough to offend anybody. Hopefully it's changed enough to attract the younger generation as well. We don't expect to convert everybody overnight. We've got some hard work in front of us. We've got a lot of live shows to do to prove ourselves. I'm confident. I know we're going to be better than ever, but we've still got to go out there and prove it to everybody else."

The January 30, 1998, show in Norfolk, Virginia, was to be Ripper's first with the band. A maximum of four songs from *Jugulator* had made the set list, namely "Blood Stained," "Bullet Train," "Burn in Hell," and less regularly, "Death Row." The album would go on to sell some 111,000 copies, not bad given the circumstances at hand, a big curiosity factor obviously part and parcel of those strong sales. A couple of months were logged in some pretty small venues before the band skipped over to Europe, the wholly incongruous Gorefest in tow, a quite intensive blanketing of the continent ensuing. Sold-out Japanese dates were next before the band wrapped up and regrouped, figuring it was time for a live album, so anybody who wasn't at the shows could hear for themselves what a treasure the band had in its new boy from Cleveland. . . .

BAPTIZM OF FIRE

(Atlantic, February ’97)

Hard Core
Paint it Black
Enter the Storm
Fuel Me Up
Extinct
Baptizm of Fire
The Healer
Cruise Control
Kill or Be Killed
Voodoo Brother
Left for Dead

EDGE OF THE WORLD

(Rhino, March ’06)

Unknown Soldier
Friendly Fire
The Holy Man
Never Say Die
Resolution
Searching
Give Blood
Crime of Passion
Walls Cave In
Edge of the World
Stronger than the Drug

18

"A LOT OF STRENGTH AND CHARACTER, THANKS TO THOSE TWO GUYS"

– Glenn Tipton

Holding up the release of *Jugulator* was the work Glenn Tipton was doing on his first solo album. *Baptizm of Fire* would find Glenn teaming up with then-current hot and heavies such as Ozzy's Robert Trujillo (previously of Suicidal Tendencies and now in Metallica), Ugly Kid Joe's Shannon Larkin (now in Godsmack) and Mr. Big's Billy Sheehan (also of Talas and David Lee Roth fame). Artists of a previous generation, such as Cozy Powell, John Entwistle and Don Airey were also a part of the complicated finished production.

I ALWAYS KNEW HOW GREAT A DRUMMER COZY WAS, BUT I HADN'T REALIZED UNTIL THAT POINT, JUST HOW GREAT JOHN WAS.

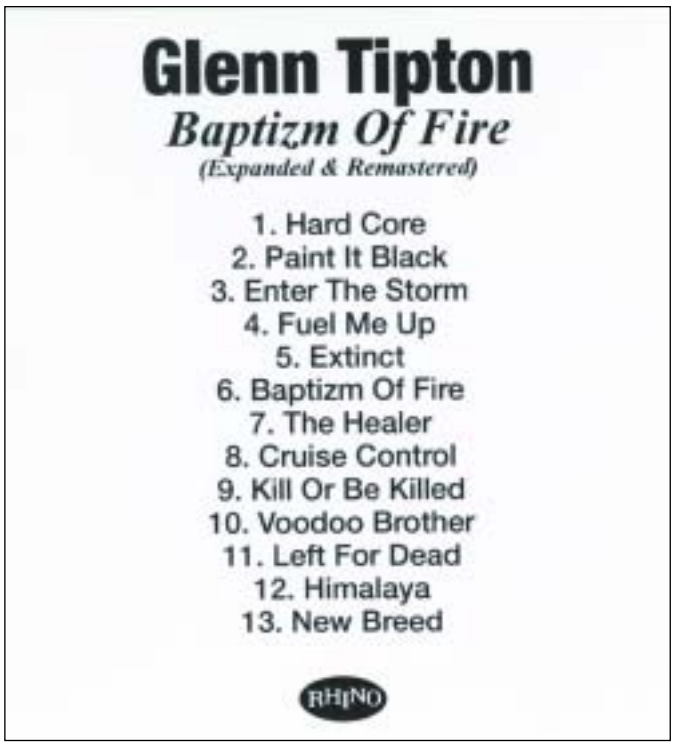
"Judge me by the solo album," said Tipton gearing up for the impending release of both the solo album and *Jugulator*, "because I've been playing with some young guys. Although I haven't indulged guitar-wise, there's still plenty of guitar there for people who are interested in listening to the way that I've advanced. The emphasis on this album is good songs, with a lot of character. I mean, vocally, I don't have the range of many singers, but I've had the luxury of writing the songs around my voice. Solo albums are the kiss of death sometimes, but this will always be me working with other people. My heart and soul is in Priest and that's the most important thing in my life. But this album is also very dear to me. I spent a lot of time on it. I think people are really going to like it."

A discussion of *Baptizm of Fire* necessarily takes in two sets of sessions, the culmination of the story reaching as far as spring 2006, with the release of the expanded edition of the album (remastered and including two bonus tracks, "New Breed" and "Himalaya," the latter

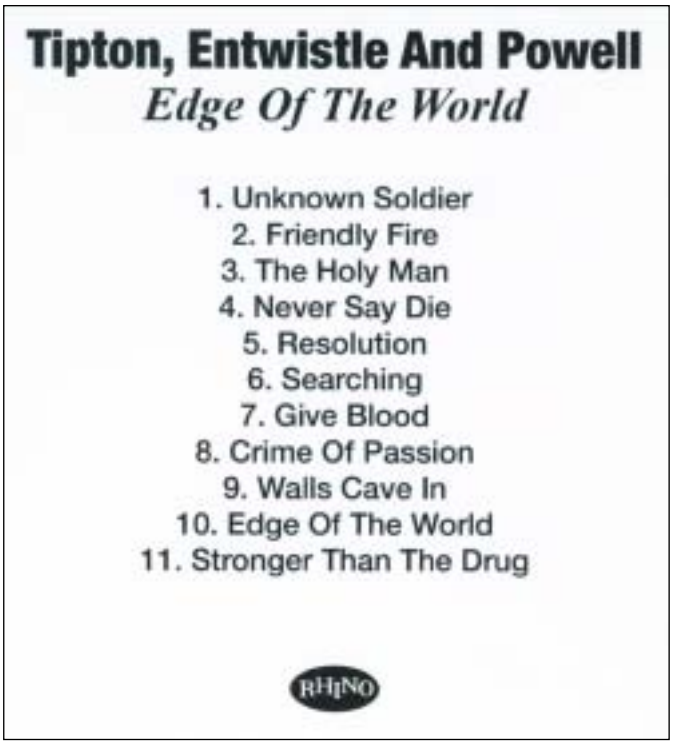
the original Japanese bonus track) and *Edge of the World*, credited to Tipton, Entwistle and Powell, a surreal lineup given that two of that trio were deceased at the time of issue.

Baptizm of Fire was essentially a slightly more relaxed and melodic version of the dark, doomy, mechanistic metal of *Jugulator*. An excellent sort of campfire ballad called "Left for Dead" would close the album, and a nasty version of the Stones' "Paint it Black" would provide light relief, as would Glenn's admittedly weak but somewhat charming vocals. "Fuel Me Up" was another highlight, providing a glimpse of what a melodic and hooky vocal can do to a robotic riff, something that might have made parts of *Jugulator* more memorable.

Discussing the release of *Edge of the World*, Tipton unravels the turn of events that resulted in two albums worth of material. "Basically, the story was, the first batch of songs I did . . . when Priest were inactive and Rob was doing his own thing, at that point in time we didn't know if there was going to be any more Priest tours or recordings or anything, and I decided to start writing some material. I approached Cozy, and we looked around and thought for a long time who could play bass, and then we thought of John. And John came around to a little studio in Wales and it was just incredible, really. I always knew how great a drummer Cozy was, but I hadn't realized until that point, just how great John was. In fact, he could play any kind of bass. So we did the first batch of songs, and at that point in time, Atlantic were interested. But they felt that the lineup was, in inverted commas, a bit old school, and encouraged me — and I had very little choice at the time — to work with some younger musicians over in the States, Billy Sheehan and Shannon Larkin and Robert Trujillo, to name a few. And honestly, a really good album came out of that. And we used a couple of tracks with John and Cozy, but there was a mixture of musicians on that album.



"The first batch of songs, which is now *Edge of the World*, I always had a lot of affection for, and I always felt it was unique in the blend of musicians on there, particularly Cozy and John. As a three-piece band, it was a pretty magical blend of styles, so I always got a lot of affection for those and I always hoped that they could see the light of day. It wasn't until recently, when Rhino/Warner heard them, that they said, 'Yeah, people have got to hear these



tracks. There is some phenomenal playing on there by John and Cozy.' So I would say that *Baptizm of Fire* is probably more modern metal, even though it was done back in '96, because it's got the younger musicians on it, all of who are excellent musicians. And I would say that *Edge of the World* probably has more character as a band, because it was just me and John and Cozy — that's the way I would differentiate between the two."

"There was a time when there was talk of it, yes," laughs Tipton, asked if there was ever a point when Cozy had been considered as drummer for Priest. "And that never came about because we got Scott. And Cozy went into Sabbath for a while. But there was talk of it, and it was a possibility at some point. But I always felt that the two best rock drummers were certainly John Bonham and Cozy, so I have a lot of respect for him. But no, back in the '70s, Cozy was always busy. There was never a time when he wasn't in a band or doing something. So I don't think it was an option 'round about then — only later."

"Cozy is, I think, just the archetypal rock drummer," says Glenn of Powell, killed in a car crash on April 5, 1998, about a year after *Baptizm* was released. "When you set foot in a studio with him, he gets a grasp straight away for what that song needs on a drum level. And he's got the ability to play everything from rock to jazz. He was a master of the double kick, or he could lay single pedal patterns down, but when a song needed a fill, Cozy could put the exact fill in that it needed. And that was his strength. He didn't overplay if it wasn't necessary, but he's got so much inside him, if it was required . . . you know, that's a master musician, someone that doesn't overplay, someone who does exactly what the song wants, but who is capable of much more if it's needed."

Said Glenn of working with coproducer Mark Dodson, "We go back a long time. We worked on *Sad Wings of Destiny* back in the early Priest days. He's always been a good friend of mine, and we always got on well in the studio. And Mark was very instrumental in putting some of the musicians together for *Baptizm of Fire*. Because he worked with them; he worked with Robert Trujillo, so he knew a lot of the musicians from over there. And Mark's got a good ear; I've got a lot of respect for him. In terms of Don Airey, Don worked on both albums; not on every track, but he was instrumental, for want of a better word, on a couple of them. And it is fitting that Don

Leah Burlington

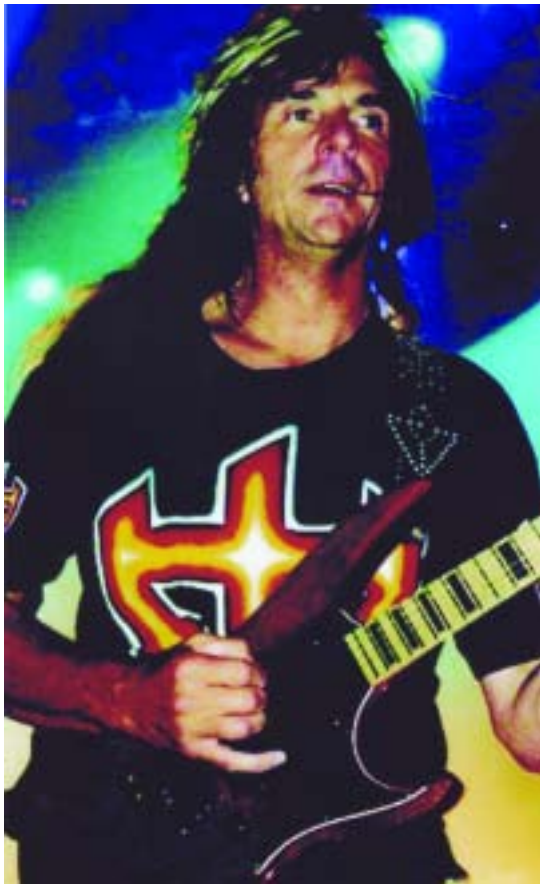
would be there, because he was always a good friend of Cozy. They were great friends, and they had worked a lot together. So he was very instinctive, and we knew what we wanted."

Glenn added that he was able to spread his wings as it were, here, versus the confines of the Priest. "Very much so. Solo albums are a funny animal, really. They're done for the right reasons or they're done for the wrong reasons. You know, at the time when I started to write these tracks, there was no Priest. So initially it was done for the right reason. And another reason I do them is to work with other musicians. It's a great opportunity to just get a feel

THAT'S A MASTER MUSICIAN, SOMEONE THAT DOESN'T OVERPLAY, SOMEONE WHO DOES EXACTLY WHAT THE SONG WANTS, BUT WHO IS CAPABLE OF MUCH MORE IF IT'S NEEDED.

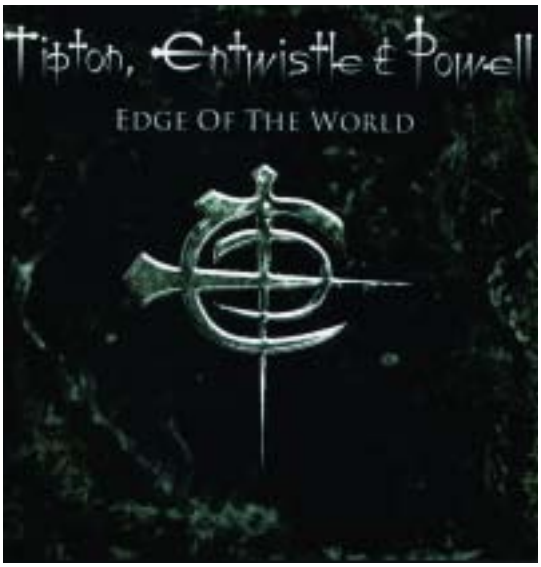
and experiment and jam and work with other musicians. But I think one of the main reasons is, as long as you're not sort of indulgent on the solo album, I believe a solo album should be all about the songs. Not really you as a musician, but great songs and what you can come up with as a song, or a band making a song. But also you've got the ability, and you just hit the nail on the head, to explore more areas and touch on areas that you wouldn't do with your own band, i.e. Judas Priest. You can visit musical areas that just aren't appropriate for Priest. You can also visit lyrical areas that you certainly wouldn't approach with Priest. And that's the major reason you're doing these albums. There's no reason on this planet that I would emulate Judas Priest, as a solo musician. I wouldn't come close because Priest for me is arguably the best metal band on the planet — as a solo artist, I would never try to compete with that."

"A lot of my favorite music is film themes," says Glenn, addressing the bonus tracks on the '06 version of *Baptizm of Fire*. "I love the dramatic fire of it. So I consider this a sort of soundtrack, Zeppelin-istic, if there is such a word, type of track. And I like the size of it. It's a great big dramatic track, and I'm very much into things like that. And 'New Breed' is very interesting, because it's a song I wrote with my daughter Corina, and my son Ricky plays drums on it. So it's a family affair, in a way, a metal family affair. But it's certainly not the Brady Bunch, by any means. And these tracks come from different sessions."



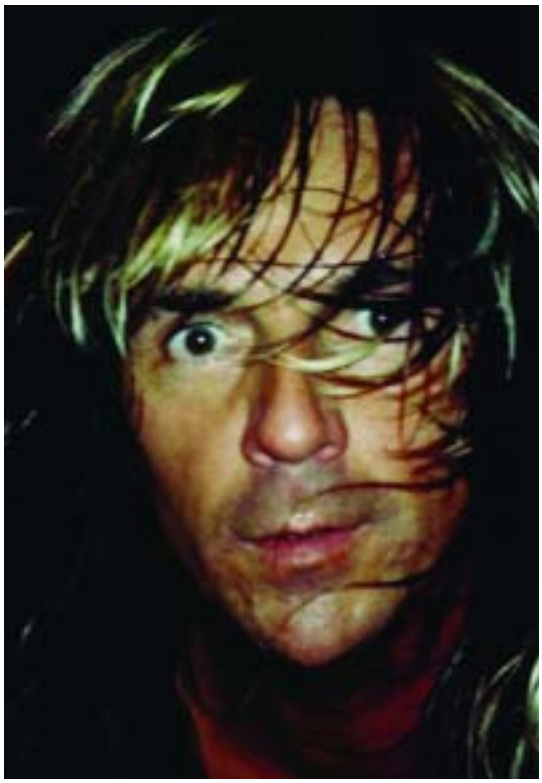
Leah Burlington

"John was incredible," muses Glenn, recounting how the legendary Who bassist ended up here in the metal realm, and then dead on June 27, 2002, from a combination of cocaine use and a bad heart. "I said early on, Cozy, there was no doubt in my mind how great a drummer Cozy was, and we spent a lot of time thinking who could be the other members of the band. And John's name came up, and we thought about it, and I always knew he was a great player with The Who, and we shared the same manager, Bill Curbishley. And through Bill I contacted John and played him some songs, and he said, 'I'd love to take part.'



So we brought him down to a little studio in Wales called Monnow Valley, and I just really couldn't believe the talent and versatility that John had. He came down, he brought about eight to twelve different basses, eight-string basses, 12-string basses, this sort of thing. And he was capable of playing anything — absolutely floored me. And I know, the one track he struck up called 'Give Blood,' [on *Edge of the World* — not the Pete Townshend song!] me and Cozy looked at each other, and it could have been no other bass player in the world but John. And suddenly we realized we'd got a great blend there, a pretty unique blend. And OK, it was done in '96, but I still think the album has a lot of strength and character, thanks to those two guys."

The *Edge of the World* material was similar to that of *Baptizm of Fire* in that Glenn's distinct and breathless vocals are there, as is his very loud and distorted guitar sound. Powell is dominant though, turning many of the songs additionally rhythmic along his signature boomy and bashy line. There are also more



Leah Burlington

keyboards, giving the record an odd grounding within a mid-'80s tradition like heavy Pete Townshend and Gary Moore or even select Robert Plant solo tracks. Much of the album sounds "epic," expansive due to the variety between tracks and layers within the arrangements. "Give Blood" is definitely a raucous highlight, given its party atmosphere and electricity from all angles. Entwistle's Lemmy-fied bass thrum can be heard within this one, and even more so on "Walls Cave In," a thumping funkster that also manages a bit of a Zeppelin vibe. The title track is also quite memorable, given, again, a Zeppelin-esque thump, as well as a proggy vibe as the band careens and lumbers from one key passage to another, then into a huge holler-along chorus that anchors the album impressively.

'98 LIVE MELTDOWN

(Steamhammer/SPV, October '98)

Disc 1

The Hellion
Electric Eye
Metal Gods
Grinder
Rapid Fire
Blood Stained
The Sentinel
Touch of Evil
Burn in Hell
The Ripper
Bullet Train
Beyond the Realms of Death
Death Row

Disc 2

Metal Meltdown
Night Crawler
Abductors
Victim of Changes
Diamonds and Rust
Breaking the Law
The Green Manalishi
(with the Two-Pronged Crown)
Painkiller
You've Got Another Thing Comin'
Hell Bent for Leather
Living After Midnight

19

"LICORICE ROOT IN CAPLET FORM"

– '98 Live Meltdown

Priest saw two releases in 1998, one a little-discussed compilation put out by the band's old label, Sony, called *Live & Rare*. Issued on March 17, and only in Japan and the U.K., the album contained a scant nine live tracks (all previously available b-sides except one), plus the Hi Octane Mix of "Turbo Lover." The album rarely shows up in the lexicon of the official Priest discography, due to its compilation nature, its non-North American issue, its tossed-off cover graphics, and its skimpy track listing. Priest isn't a band with a lot in the way of rarities, but the reissue program of '01 would prove that there were a handful of goofy curios to be had.

Mick Hutson/Redferns

More importantly (but only just!), the band issued, on September 28th, *'98 Live Meltdown*, a power-packed double CD showcasing Ripper's extensive skills as replacement for the Metal God, the versions chosen as much for extent of crowd reaction as they were for performance by the band.

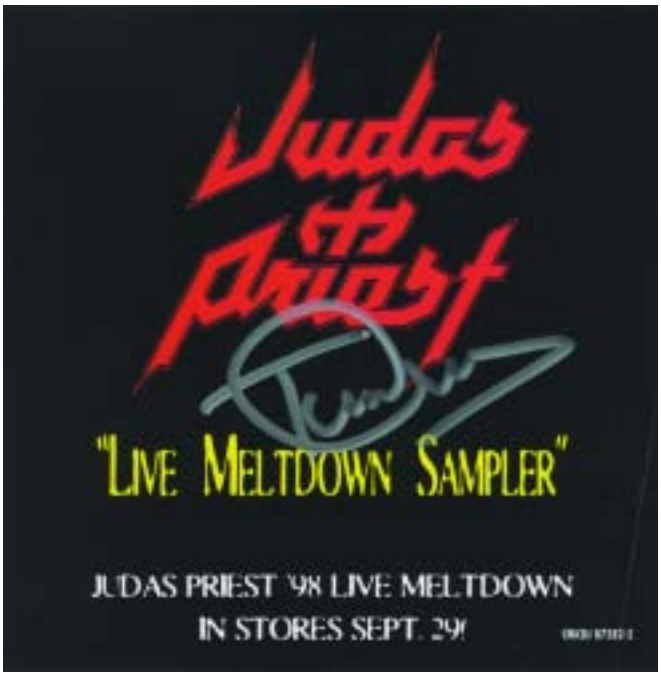
Explained Owens, "Throughout the whole tour the shows were going so good and the response was great, and we were going through Europe, and we decided maybe the time is right to put out a live album and show what a raw heavy metal show was all about. And that's basically what this album is. It's raw, it shows a lot of the crowd, we didn't overdub things. We also wanted to show that I was accepted with open arms. There were a few songs, probably more than a few, that were better vocally than

the versions that made the record, but we were looking for takes where the whole structure — the crowd, the whole way the band works — was our best version. It was probably about a dozen shows; we just took a DAT and started taping. All the takes are from European dates, including London and probably Brussels. In terms of the songs, 'Diamonds and Rust' was only played at a couple of shows, but we now have that in our American set. And 'Rapid Fire' was one that was only played at a few shows."

Ripper figures that out of all the guys, Tipton did most of the work putting the record together. "I was in there for a while and did quite a bit of stuff, threw around a few ideas, helped out. My ideas were more about which songs we should choose, title of the album, artwork, maybe stuff I said live that I didn't want in there, or songs I thought really went well."

With respect to his live persona, Ripper says there wasn't much tampering with his style. "No, not at all. You know, we just went and rehearsed. I think we worked out a few things about what to say between songs, how that works with the songs themselves. But no, nothing. It was just a natural groove. I think it's changed a bit since the beginning. There were a few bad shows on that tour — the Toronto show and the Washington show were not great; my throat just wasn't good. I've now just had two of my better shows ever in Phoenix and L.A. — I just sung amazing. I have another show in L.A. tonight, and I'm thinking, well if I don't sing so great tonight, that's OK because I sung really good last night [laughs]."

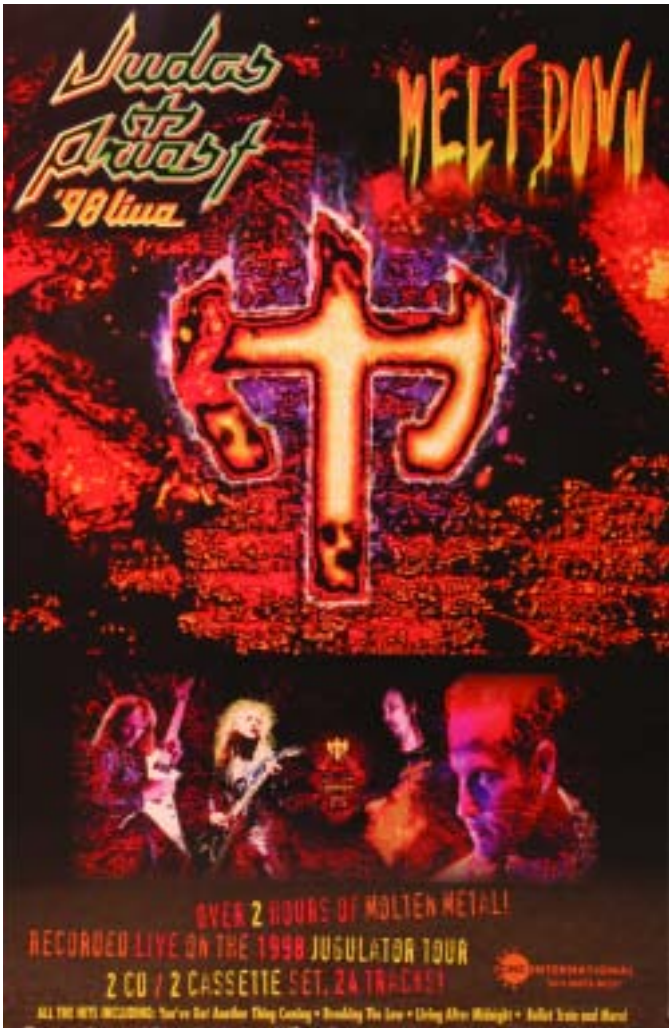
I HAVE ANOTHER SHOW IN L.A. TONIGHT, AND I'M THINKING, WELL IF I DON'T SING SO GREAT TONIGHT, THAT'S OK BECAUSE I SUNG REALLY GOOD LAST NIGHT.



"In Japan I think it was around 4000 people, in a theatre," says Ripper about crowd size on the tour, adding that he had thought *Jugulator* had done about a half million in sales worldwide. "In Mexico we did a show with Megadeth where there were 15–16,000 people — that was fun. Europe was in that 2000, 3000 range, although Spain was 6000."

"I do exercise regularly, and right now I'm mad because there's no gym in this hotel," says Ripper, when asked about keeping his voice in shape. "I'm going to have to try and find one up the street. I drink a lot of water, take vitamins. I have licorice root in capsule form, and I also have it in liquid form. You put it in a little bit of water and you drink it, and it's good for your throat. But I like the caplets because you can open them up and pour the powder in. I've only been doing it for about a week. Some singer in my hometown recommended that. In terms of alcohol, sometimes I don't drink anything; sometimes it's one or two beers after the show. Even when I'm in the same place for two nights — last night I had two beers, and as a matter of fact, half of one of them is still sitting right here by my bed."

Many fans figured it was Ripper who was the catalyst for pushing *Jugulator* more youthfully extreme. Not so, says Owens. "I think they're more knowledgeable about modern metal than I am. They've always listened to it, probably more than I do. I listen to a lot of hometown bands, bands like Spawn, Disengage. I also like the new Anthrax a lot, and in the old days, Maiden, Dio, Priest. In terms of non-metal, I like Harry Connick Jr., that chick with the glasses, Lisa Loeb, I'd do her; I'd steam up her glasses. In terms of classics, Bachman Turner Overdrive — the old BTO, baby! — REO Speedwagon. I like Elvis, and you know what? One of my favorites is Dion & the Belmonts, which my dad used to always play."


Judas Priest
'98 Live
MELTDOWN
OVER 2 HOURS OF MOLTEN METAL!
RECORDED LIVE ON THE 1998 JUGULATOR TOUR
2 CD / 2 CASSETTE SET, 24 TRACKS!

Not much Dion & the Belmonts influence on *'98 Live Meltdown*. Tim does a killer job of growling his way menacingly through these 24 tracks, with five bloodstained selections lifted from *Jugulator*, and a good look at the *Painkiller* album added for obvious synergy. In terms of old chestnuts, "Rapid Fire" is a welcome obscurity, as is "The Sentinel," while "Beyond the Realms of Death" and "Diamonds and Rust" are offered bravely and beautifully rendered. Indeed, the idea to perform "Diamonds and Rust" acoustic came from an experience during a photo shoot. Apparently the band was bored, waiting to strike their poses. To pass the time, they picked up acoustic guitars and ran through a few Priest classics campfire-style.

Still, fans were getting restless, looking at the release of a live album as a bit of a cash-in. Subsequently, portions of the base would be asking impatiently for a new studio album, while another flank of the leather faithful took to chattering about wanting Rob back in black, perched at his rightful throne, ready to erase the current memory of a Priest so unforgiving and humorless.

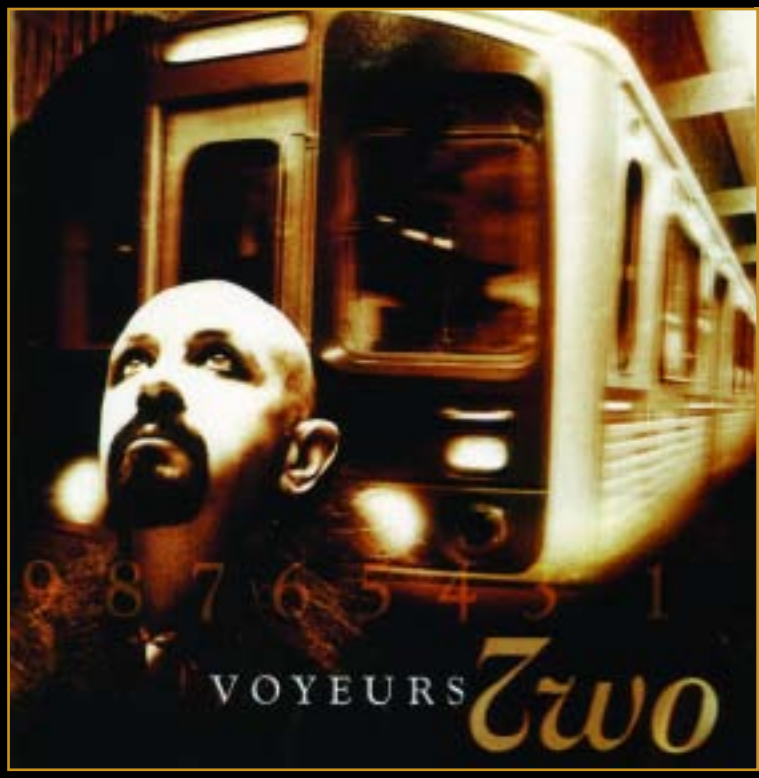
VOYEURS
(Nothing, March '98)

I Am a Pig
Stutter Kiss
Water's Leaking
My Ceiling's Low
Leave Me Alone
If
Deep in the Ground
Hey, Sha La La
Wake Up
Gimp
Bed of Rust

20

"ACTION/REACTION, POSITIVE/NEGATIVE"

– Two



Priest was wrapped in black and back, and although reviews of *Jugulator* leaned toward the negative, the band had noticeably regained some ground on the road. If the band's new writing — both lyrics and music — could be faulted as garish, juvenile, and hard to love, none of that fell to Ripper. *Jugulator* had been written before Owens arrived, credit for these joyless and braying songs going simply to K.K. and Glenn. What's more, Ripper was blazing a red-hot trail live. Crowds understandably compared the band to that of the glory years — a result of an ailing industry as much as a change of singer — but those who came to the altar of the Priest for the most part left jaw-dropped at the power and persona of the new man at the mic.

ACTION/REACTION, POSITIVE/NEGATIVE, HARMONY, TWO PEOPLE TO MAKE A RELATIONSHIP . . . IT JUST ALL SEEMED TO MAKE SENSE.

This surely must have chafed Rob's leather chaps. Priest had some thunder and he seemed to want to steal some of it, especially after periodic rapping at the door to get back in. His hat-backwards outfit Fight had fought its last, and Rob was about to unleash Two, a band concept that seemed to throw not the horns but the finger to his metal roots. Ergo, Rob famously declared metal dead, raised the level of ire aimed at his old bands and made a bunch of no-never-again pronouncements, stating that he could never under any circumstances play with the Priest again.

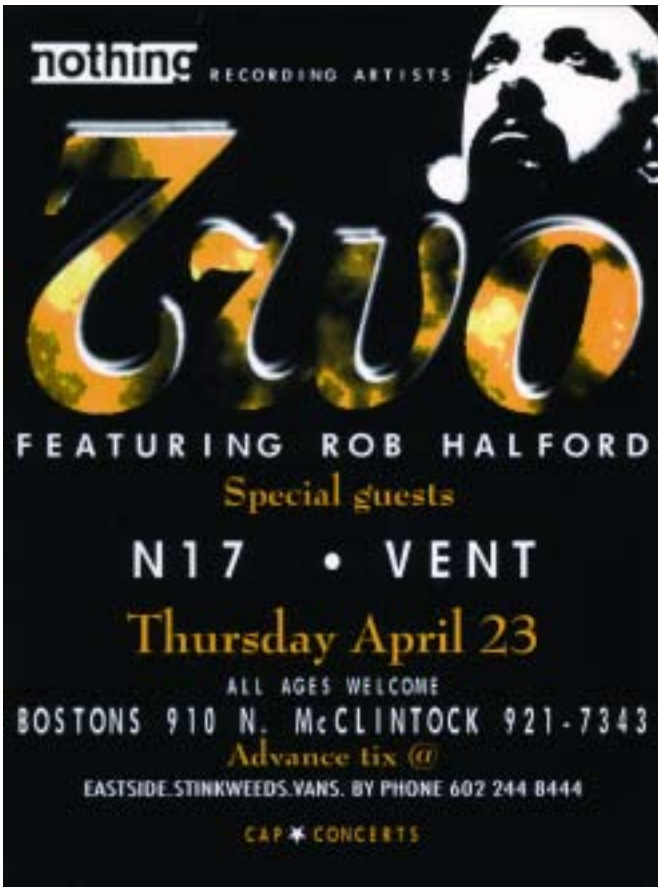
He also came out of the closet on MTV, and then once out, became pretty preachy about being gay, being yourself, the responsibilities of coming out of the closet. This opened new doors for the man press-wise and he walked through them and gave his sermons. Priest then was forced to talk about it, and, well, some of Priest's thunder as a band struggling for new life was, in effect, stolen. Rob being gay wasn't exactly a secret, but he and the four other guys in the band had never talked about it openly in 25 years of doing business. The lid was pretty effectively put on this nugget of information, in a sense, almost perfectly, from a public relations standpoint. A portion of the industry — fans, insiders, press — knew, but all were polite about not pointing it out. Amusingly, this meant that rarely was there ever anything to deny. Significantly, it also would have been a surprise to millions of people, maybe even tens of thousands of fans. That's quite plausible, because, as I say, it was never talked about. So — though it might not seem like a big deal now, here was Priest having to deal with it, talk about Rob when they'd rather be talking about their new singer and their new music. Also, given that heavy metal is such a hetero male–dominated arena, it's possible the band's reputation suffered at least slightly from Rob's self-outing.

But the main news was that Rob had a new industrial-flavored band called Two, along with a new album of all original material called *Voyeurs*. "What happened was we had originally called ourselves Halford," explains Rob. "We

put together the original batch of songs that we had been making in L.A., and we had played a few dates in order to bring in a few industry people to check this out. Then there was Gimp; that was basically the name we agreed to go with. Then we found out there was another band called Gimp who had the trademark. So we had to drop that idea completely. In retrospect the decision was a good one — I would dread being in a band called Gimp right now. It wouldn't have felt the least bit right. So we were kind of nameless for a while. Until it was one of those things where you can see the wood for the trees, you know? Two of us started this band, so we decided to call the band Two, but from there it then made sense because of the other things associated with the word 'two': action/reaction, positive/negative, harmony, two people to make a relationship, the kind of technological edge of things . . . it just all seemed to make sense. We did not want to give a name that put a picture in the head, you know . . . like Kitchen Sink. We did not want people to hear it and imagine, 'Oh, so that's what that's going be like.' We just wanted an almost nameless identity."

Rob's writing partners for the Two material would be producer Bob Marlette, notable for his collaborations with Alice Cooper, and guitarist John Lowery, or "John 5," who has worked with Marilyn Manson, David Lee Roth, and more recently, Rob Zombie. The rest of the lineup was a bit fluid between the recording and the subsequent debacle of a tour, about which Rob, at the time, was his ever-hopeful self. "It's a five-piece band, and we've already began rehearsing here in L.A. and it just really sounds great. The cool thing about it . . . people who know about me and my background know that I've been associated with a band that's had a lot of power, a lot of drive, a lot of heavy tone and a lot of energy."

IN RETROSPECT THE DECISION WAS A GOOD ONE — I WOULD DREAD BEING IN A BAND CALLED GIMP RIGHT NOW.



THERE WAS MORE FOR ME TO DO, AND THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT WAS FOR ME TO TAKE A WALK FROM ONE MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT INTO ANOTHER.

But that didn't mean Rob was positioning this new thing as exactly that, or exactly metal. "I still follow it. It's still an important part of my life," explained Rob, asked about his relationship to the genre at this juncture. "I still love that music so much, but then all the years I was associated with Priest, my musical tastes were just as broad and diverse and eclectic as they are now. It's just that I chose to put myself in that particular area, because at that time that's where I felt the most comfortable and the most productive. I just felt that by the time the *Painkiller* record came out, and by the time we played that very last show in Toronto, I just felt that my journey was complete. There was more for me to do, and the only way to do that was for me to take a walk from one musical environment into another."

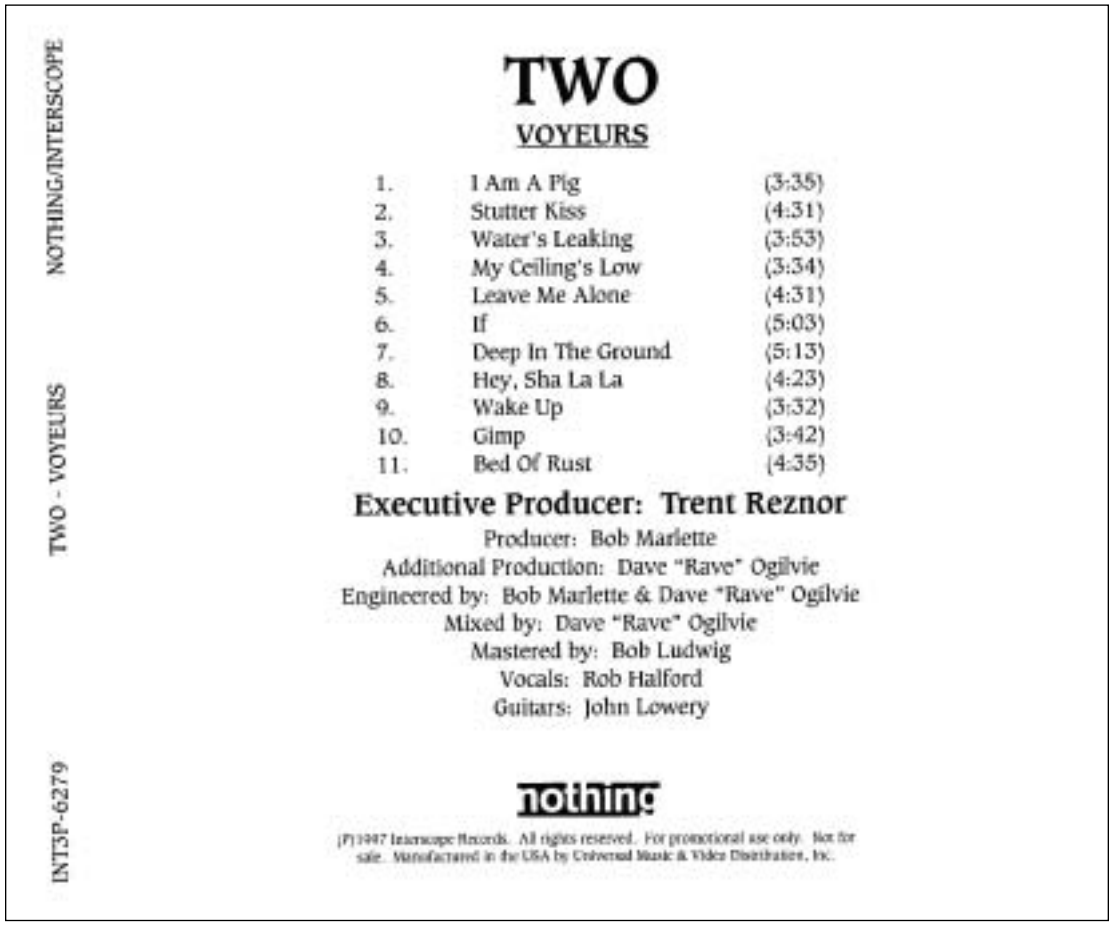
Still, Rob doesn't cop to the fact that, through the last four or five records, it was becoming more about monsters made of metal. "No, personally, I never felt that way. I got a great deal of satisfaction personally out of writing songs like 'Night Crawler' and 'Stained Class.' I mean, there were endless experimentations on themes of fantastic figures and so forth, some of it not so fantastic, but pretty straightforward, in songs like 'Living After Midnight' and 'Breaking the Law.' So for me, it was always a lot of fun to sit down with a pen and a blank sheet of paper and create these things. I went sociopolitical on some of the stuff with Fight; it was kind of a moment of letting go, encapsulating some of the things that had been building up inside me. So the Fight experience was a good one; we had a good time making those two records, but I think the feeling was mutual after *A Small Deadly Space* — it was where else do we go next? It was kind of a burned-out format, musically speaking. I think that band was a

combination of everybody's feelings. I'm only now beginning to appreciate what Fight did to people. Maybe I was too close to it to really understand where it went, what it meant, and where it might have gone later on."

"I would say that our roots are still very much in rock," continued Rob, discussing Two, "but it's a new hybrid of what's going on around us right now. There are elements of rock throughout this record caught up with electronica and techno stuff, and it's just really a multidimensional experience. I don't think you can stick a label effectively on it because we deal in lot of different things. One minute we're doing a pop rock song like 'Hey, Sha La La,' and the next thing we're doing something really deep and moving like 'Bed of Rust.' It's just very cut up, you know? It's hard to pin down.

"Lyrically, a lot of it is abstract, but some of it is pretty straightforward like 'Leave Me Alone.' But songs like 'If' and 'My Ceiling's Low' and 'Stutter Kiss' and 'Water's Leaking' leave me with a kind of confused feeling. I'm trying to make the words as interesting and as unusual as some of the sounds that surround them, so I'm not really going out there to send a specific message in the whole piece. Some of it has that effect, but some of it's . . . well, words put together in a strange way. The vocal approaches on 'Stutter Kiss' and a bunch of the other songs, that was really drawn out of me by the work of Bob Marlette, one of the original songwriters for Two. He was really my vocal coach and was really pushing me to take my vocal abilities into different areas which I really had not done before. Lyrically, I'm mostly a last minute kind of guy anyway. I just carry all this stuff around in me and I sit down and listen to a certain piece of music and how it makes me feel and figure out what I want to try to say. So it's kind of spontaneous. The lyrics for Two came quickly."

Some of the additional press Two enjoyed was due to the fact that the album was issued on Trent Reznor's label, Nothing. "It was really one of those rock 'n' roll things; we had met


NOTHING/INTERSCOPE
TWO - VOYEURS
INT3P-6279
TWO
VOYEURS
1. I Am A Pig (3:35)
2. Stutter Kiss (4:31)
3. Water's Leaking (3:53)
4. My Ceiling's Low (3:34)
5. Leave Me Alone (4:31)
6. If (5:03)
7. Deep In The Ground (5:13)
8. Hey, Sha La La (4:23)
9. Wake Up (3:32)
10. Gimp (3:42)
11. Bed Of Rust (4:35)
Executive Producer: Trent Reznor
Producer: Bob Marlette
Additional Production: Dave "Rave" Ogilvie
Engineered by: Bob Marlette & Dave "Rave" Ogilvie
Mixed by: Dave "Rave" Ogilvie
Mastered by: Bob Ludwig
Vocals: Rob Halford
Guitars: John Lowery
nothing
(P) 1997 Interscope Records. All rights reserved. For promotional use only. Not for sale. Manufactured in the USA by Universal Music & Video Distribution, Inc.

for the first time at a party in New Orleans," says Rob on the collaboration. "And I had done some demos, and he asked if he could hear them. So I played them for him, and that was it. I didn't hear anything from him for weeks and months until I went back to Phoenix from New Orleans, and he just called me up out of the blue one day and offered me, first of all, a record contract, and more importantly, he said he wanted to give me ideas and impressions of where the music could go, from its original presentation."

The material, says Rob, became transformed, "dramatically. He literally reconstructed everything and rebuilt it together with the melody — the pure source of the material is still pretty much intact. But all of the cool things that are going on around it are all out of Trent's world." Executive producer credit would go to Trent, producer credit to Marlette, and additional production credit to Dave "Rave" Ogilvie, of Skinny Puppy fame — a bytehead trinity to be sure.

Of note, John 5, a big part of the *Voyeurs* writing process, wasn't around for a chunk of the sessions. "I went on tour with a female artist named Leah Andreone, on RCA Records, and when I went on tour, Rob was at Trent's studio in New Orleans, which . . . I would've given any-

thing to be there, but I was in the middle of France playing these shows. So I unfortunately missed all of that. I'm such a big Nine Inch Nails fan, and I was so crushed, and I remember getting phone cards over in France and calling over there, 'How does it sound?' [laughs]. It was too bad I missed that whole thing in New Orleans . . ." And all of this took some time — the album was in fact scheduled for an early '97 release, but delays due to the Trent Reznor piece took it into the following year.

Indeed *Voyeurs* (working title: *Gear*) turned out to be your standard industrial metal album of the day, nothing more, nothing less. Vocals get treatment, as do drums, amid many keyboard blips and blorps and churning, humorless riffs set on a bed of mechanistic, fatigue-inducing rhythms. Press reaction was almost entirely negative. The production is amazing, and the songs do cohere, building a whole that is better than the sum of its parts. It's also cool to see this other side of Rob — a man who hides much of what he is. But alas, *Voyeurs* was viewed as a braying, awkward shock of attempted trendiness, and its repetitive, nursery rhyme vocal melodies drove fans nuts. Worse, it now sounds dated.

Rob has indicated at least elliptically that Two's short-lived time on the road was demoralizing, and that the writing was on the wall that he was what he was, and that was, essentially, the father of power metal. Post-release and pre-tour, Rob roll-called the lineup that would try to perform the complicated album as "Sid Riggs, a very powerful freaky-looking dude on drums, Ray Riendeau on bass — he used to be with Machines of Loving Grace — and James Wooley on keyboards, who used to be with Nine Inch Nails. We're going to use James' talents to make the sounds off the record that are obviously not from guitar or bass. We only have enough material for barely an hour, and if we're going to be in headline mode in some locations, then we'll pull out some of the other work, i.e. Priest. We've talked about it, and we want to do it. It would be a cool thing to do. We've not rehearsed any of that yet, but we're making up a list."

Priest material did eventually make the set list, but that didn't stop shows in America and Europe being cancelled due to low ticket sales. There are even stories of fans burning their Priest concert T-shirts in protest, not to mention hoots and jeers and cutting requests for Priest classics. It's for history to decide whether declining an offer to join Ozzfest '98 was in the band's best interest or not.

"That was so great, because he was such a nice guy," said John 5, with respect to his brief Two experience. "You hate to meet your idols when they're not really nice to you. But he was such a cool, cool down-to-earth guy and it was so cool to have him in such a great working atmosphere. And of course, he was an amazing singer, one of the best in the world. He was on the money every night and a real pleasure to work with. It just didn't seem like he ever had a bad day. It just didn't ever seem like he was down. He was always very motivated and up and ready to do anything. And in the studio, he

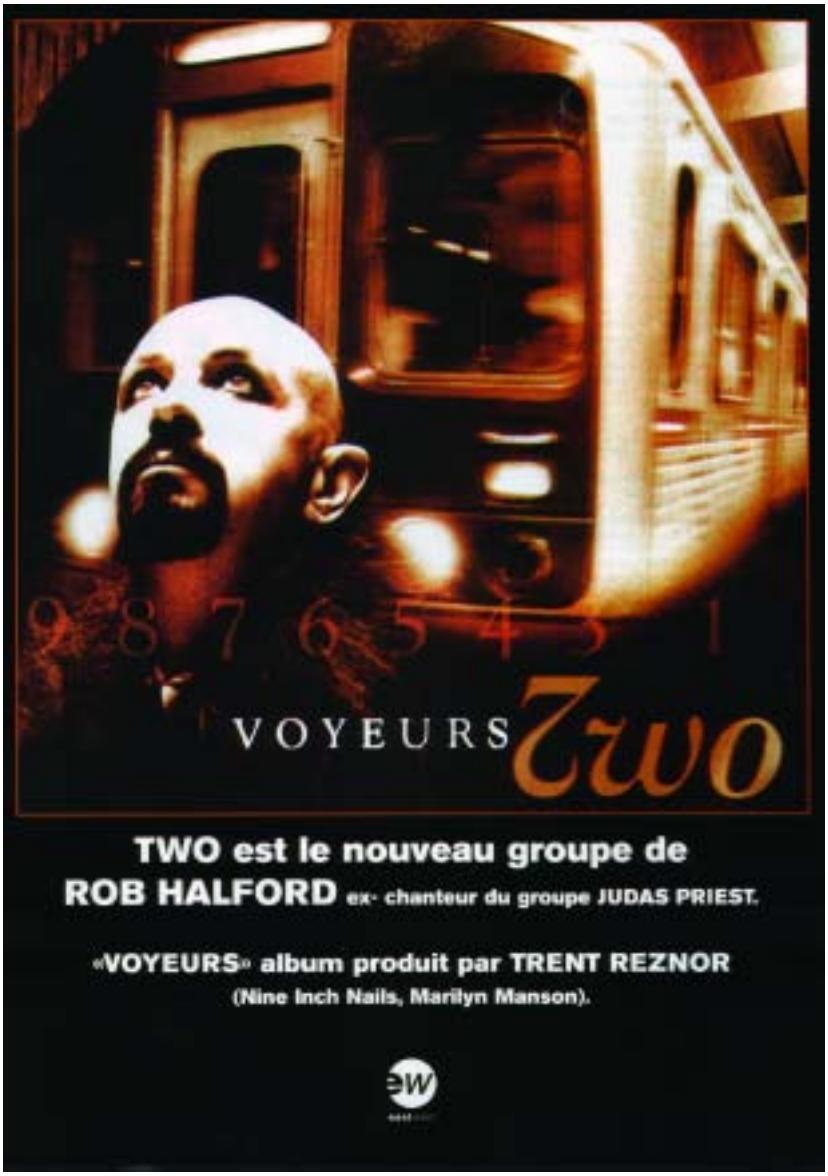
just comes in and belts! I mean, he likes the studio dark and cool and stuff like that, but he just comes into the studio and makes it his own world. He just belts and sings so perfect, no pitch correction — even his timing was great."

"We got such a mixed crowd," recalls John, diplomatic as ever, looking at the difficulty the band had convincing people of the value of Two in a concert situation. "We got a lot of goth people, but then a lot of Judas Priest fans, of course. So it came across where people were dying to hear that Priest stuff, and it really wasn't that kind of band. It was more like a current, industrial rock thing, you know? Trent Reznor was a coproducer on that as well, so it was more along those lines. And I don't think those old Priest fans really got that. But we had such a good time. I didn't really see him bummed out or anything. He probably just kept it in, you know? And we did some phenomenal shows, some cool, big shows. I don't remember any problems. I mean, people worship that guy; people love that guy. He would get so many fans wanting to meet him. At The Palace in Los Angeles . . . people are still talking about that show. It seemed like everybody was at that show, including Bruce Dickinson. We played with Rammstein, and it was just a star-studded event."

Indeed it's been said that Halford was upset that Two was opening for Rammstein, but the guys in Rammstein never saw it that way, saying that essentially they were two bands playing on the same day, as a package. In any event, the show is considered a bit of a milestone in Rammstein's modest success in America, a sort of icebreaker for the pyromaniac Germans, as it were. All told, Two played approximately 22 dates in the U.S. through April and May of '98, with the show at the Palace being the fifth, on April 27th. In and around 19 more dates were logged once the band got to Europe, from mid-June to mid-July of that year. Rob is said to have made his decision to knock the Two idea on its head during the Switzerland stop, promptly canceling the balance of the tour.

And for John 5, Two's demise opened the door toward his next step up the rock 'n' shock food chain, one that eventually deposited him in the position of right-hand man to Rob Zombie.

"We did a tour in the States, which was so fun, and then we went to Europe and had a great time there. I think we played the whole second side of *Sin After Sin* — I think we did all of that. Now, help me out here. I think that's the record where there are big epic songs that run into each other? People went nuts for that. But I remember we were playing our last show, I think in Germany, and Marilyn Manson was going to be there. I was really into Marilyn Manson, I was like, 'Oh god, gotta see Manson.' But then he canceled and I was really bummed, because I kept on missing going to see Marilyn Manson. I had tried so many times, but I was either playing with k.d. lang or something like that. But they canceled, and we came back from the Halford tour and I joined Marilyn Manson, and that was pretty much the end of that."


9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
VOYEURS Two
TWO est le nouveau groupe de
ROB HALFORD ex- chanteur du groupe JUDAS PRIEST.
«VOYEURS» album produit par TRENT REZNOR
(Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson).

There's some controversy over the timing of John 5 quitting Two, his departure to replace Zim Zum in Marilyn Manson listed as July '98, with a debate over a possible touring gig with David Lee Roth thrown into the mix as well. Whatever the case, it was the final nail in the coffin. Rob had cited lack of label support for cutting the tour short, yet he still spoke of plans to continue the band, albeit in a more heavy metal and less industrial direction. Halford had even recorded some demos with new guitarist Derek Taylor, but then officially left Nothing Records and put Two to rest. His next move, the Halford band, would efficiently incinerate memories of Rob's bold venture into industrial, and clearly put the Metal God back in the good books of the heavy metal faithful.

RESURRECTION
(Metal-Is, August '00)

Resurrection
Made in Hell
Locked and Loaded
Night Fall
Silent Screams
The One You Love to Hate
Cyberworld
Slow Down
Twist
Temptation
Drive
Saviour

CRUCIBLE
(Metal-Is, June '02)

Park Manor
Crucible
One Will
Betrayal
Handing out Bullets
Hearts of Darkness
Crystal
Heretic
Golgotha
Wrath of God
Weaving Sorrow
Sun
Trail of Tears
She
Fugitive

LIVE INSURRECTION
(Metal-Is, April '01)

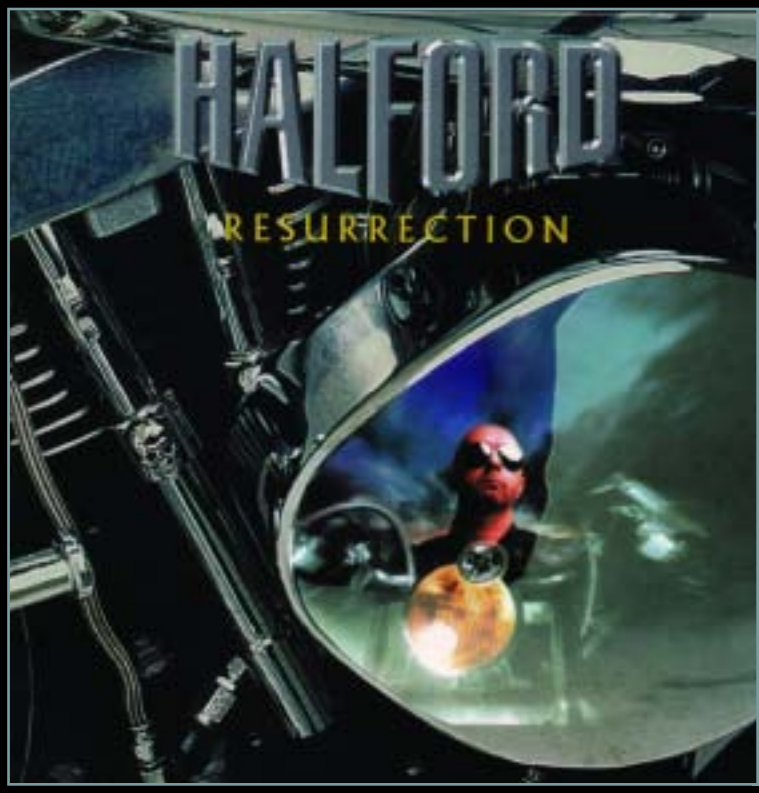
Disc 1:
Resurrection
Made in Hell
Into the Pit
Nailed to the Gun
Light Comes out of Black
Stained Class
Jawbreaker
Running Wild
Slow Down
The One You Love to Hate
Life in Black
Hell's Last Survivor
Sad Wings
Saviour
Silent Screams

Disc 2:
Cyberworld
The Hellion
Electric Eye
Riding on the Wind
Genocide
Beyond the Realms of Death
Metal Gods
Breaking the Law
Tyrant
Screaming in the Dark
Heart of a Lion
Prisoner of Your Eyes

21

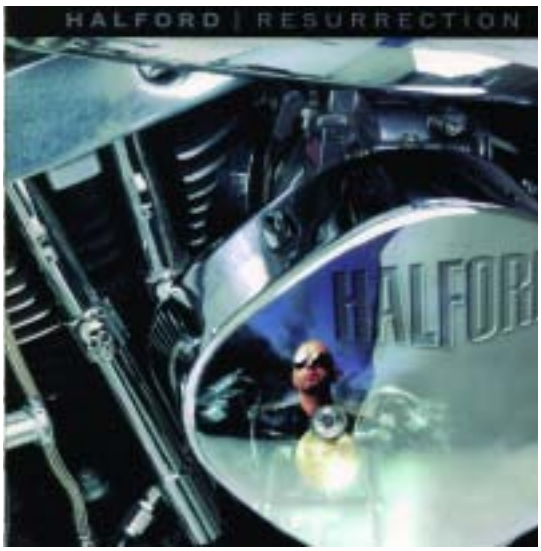
"THIS IS WHERE ALL THE BEST THINGS HAPPEN FOR ME"

– Halford



"Re-sur-rec-tion!"

As the sliders came up on the first Halford band CD, there was our man feeling and singing high as a lead zeppelin. And once Metal Mike Chlasciak ripped into the riff of the opening track of the "Halford's back" title track, a studded gauntlet was thrown down. It was a development to be sure — third time persistent: Rob had now created a screecher of a heavy metal classic universally seen as better than the current offering from the root band, Judas Priest.



Resurrection, from a band called Halford, would be issued on August 8, 2000, and by all accounts fans were thrilled, the general consensus being that this was the kind of album we'd all like from Priest right about now, the quality of *Resurrection* tipping the scales to the point where folks were considering Halford essentially the current, serviceable, viable, authentic-as-possible version of Priest. It's worth a good long look at this record, if only for the fact that you'd be hard-pressed to find a Priest fan who doesn't consider it a bold and essential part of the twisted tale.

"It's all relevant to the musicians you are working with," began Rob, one week before the album's release, crediting the men that fought for *Resurrection* — and won. "And the key writers on this record besides myself are Pat Lachman and Metal Mike, the two guitar players, and to some extent Roy Z. So these two guys, Pat and Mike, brought in their own ideas from the world of metal that they loved, into the writing process. So it was very freeform, the way we went, other than the use of metal riffs, metal rhythms, and all the key ingredients to making good metal songs. And Roy Z's main guidance was that we had to make sure the platform was there for the voice. So I would say the way it differs from a Priest album is that it's obviously brand new players bringing their own style and character to the writing and performing. But there are some traditional elements of Priest in there, because again the voice works best in certain frameworks. But I love the record because it's broad-based. You have parts of it that have a twinge of what's happened before, and then you have great moments like 'Silent Screams,' which have the elements of a classic metal ballad in the front end and then it just takes off into this new realm. And you've got a song like 'Slow Down' which is a great balance as far as a different type of metal approach. It's a unique record."

Roy Z is credited with helping Bruce Dickinson realize his solo album dreams, Bruce — whether he wants to go about admitting it or not — in possession of a record every bit as good as anything Maiden has ever done, *The Chemical Wedding*, and two, *Accident of Birth* and *Tyranny of Souls*, that would slay at least half the Maiden catalog at a distance of twenty leg-warmered paces.

This left Bob Marlette of Two infamy on the sidelines. "It was difficult for me to move on from Bob because he's a very good friend as well as a great writer," explained Rob. "But I just felt that instinctively I needed to go with Roy. And this is not to put down Bob at all. Bob is a very complete guy as a producer and as a

songwriter. But Roy Z is a metalhead. He's a metalhead. And that's the important connection. He has such a grasp of everything that I've done, everything that I'm about, that that was an important part of the chemistry. So I'm not discounting the fact that I might do something again with Bob in the future, because he wrote 'Silent Screams' with me and he is also instrumental in some of the other areas of some of the songs that were embellished by Roy and Pat and Mike. So he's a great contributor to the record. But I needed Roy Z as a producer because of his metal understanding and his comprehension of what we were trying to do here."

On top of being a metalhead, Roy is also a virtuoso guitarist, known for his helmsmanship of Latin rock band Tribe of Gypsies, as well as axeman for Bruce Dickinson. Surely there must be uncredited Roy Z performances on *Resurrection* . . .

"No. Oh, tell a lie, tell a lie. I think there's one. He does a little bit of a lead break on 'Drive.' I was just scratch vocaling. I got that riff and I played it for weeks and I said, 'God, Roy, I can't figure out what to fucking say.' And I'm in the TV room of the studio while we're doing some rough pre-production, and I've got the boom box and he's in the corner making coffee, and then I started singing. And he goes 'What are you singing?' 'I don't know.' Because I do this all the time — spontaneously, subconsciously. And he says 'You're singing something . . . what's it about, wheels? Got you under my wheels?' And I said 'I think I'm singing "Got you under my wheels, baby; that's where you belong."' And he said, 'That's it then.' We had the title, 'Drive.' And he said, 'Let's go with that.' And I think because it was one of the last tracks we had done, we weren't sure we were going to use it. We didn't have a lead break section for it.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE WALKED UP TO THE MIC AND SAID, 'I'M DIGGING DEEP INSIDE MY SOUL TO BRING MYSELF OUT OF THIS GODDAMNED HOLE.'

So Roy does the lead on 'Drive,' and I think that's it. Everything else is Pat and Mike."

"Drive" is just one of a relentless batch of pure metal rockers all over this album, even if its stutter gallop makes it one of the more casual tracks. One complaint that's possible to level at *Resurrection* is that it's a bit slick and safe, sort of too self-aware, just like *Heaven and Hell* and *Mob Rules* versus the Ozzy stuff preceding them. And Rob fully admits to an "I am what I am" moment, a point that could prompt a lyric like "Resurrection bring me home," home meaning an area where one can be comfortable and not take chances.

"It came out of the live shows with Two in Switzerland. I was coming offstage and I was thinking, 'This just isn't right. I don't feel like I know how I want to feel.' I want to come offstage mentally and physically depleted. I want to feel that certain way. And I wasn't getting that from the Two stuff. And I'm not dissing the Two record. It just wasn't happening for me live. So I went back to the States and then spoke to Bob and I said, 'Look, this is what's been going on and this is what I want to do.' And he said, 'Let's start writing.' So we did, and

the germ of the album therefore is the 'Silent Screams' track. And I stuck that on the Internet and everybody went ballistic. 'This is great, Rob! Is this what you're going to do? Are you coming on to metal?' 'Yeah, this is it. This is where all the best things happen for me.' So I worked with Bob for a few more weeks and at the same time, I was building my friendship with Roy Z and then the cutoff point came, and I went from Bob's place to Roy's place and that's when we proceeded."

Rob called in a Priest gun from the past in songwriter-to-the-stars Bob Halligan Jr. The result is one of the album's most melodic but also most memorable tracks, "Twist," which, with "Slow Down" and "Temptation," adds welcome shape, depth and commercial appeal to an otherwise balls-out record.

"Isn't that a great song?" says Rob about "Twist" and its gorgeous chorus. "Very spontaneous. I was doing a lot of research and I thought I wonder what Bob Halligan is doing these days? So I got his number and called him up. He's living in Nashville, Tennessee. I said 'What are you doing in Nashville?' and he said, 'This is where I live now; I've got the family and kids and everything.' And he said he was doing all this kind of folky, new age stuff. And I said, 'You're doing what?!' And he said he had been doing it for years. And he said, 'What are you up to?' And I said 'Well, I'm doing a new metal record — can you still write rock 'n' roll?' And he said, 'Yeah, sure I can!' And I said, 'Write me a tune.' So I left him to it and then about a week later he calls me up and says, 'Oh, I'm so excited. I've got this ten-year-old son and he's right into metal and he said, "Dad, that's the kind of stuff you need to play"' [laughs]. And he played it to me down the phone, and I said, 'Bob, that's a really good song; just work on it a little more for me.' And a couple of weeks later it was done. Bob was the only guy that I thought about because he wrote those great songs '(Take These) Chains' and 'Some Heads Are Gonna Roll' — he's worked with Blue Öyster Cult also. Great songwriting. 'Twist' is a really cool song."

"I'm talking about a lot of personal stuff, directly, which I've never done before," notes Rob, addressing *Resurrection*'s lyrical positions. "I've always used language in a kind of an ambiguous way, using innuendo or smokescreen language in my metal stuff over the years. But this is the first time I've walked up to the mic and said, 'I'm digging deep inside my soul to bring myself out of this goddamned hole.' That's pretty brutal, life-is-on-the-line stuff. So that was a challenge. Roy Z said, 'What are you going to write about?' And I said, 'Z, I don't know. I've got to find something to say.' So he said, 'Just tell them about what's been going on in your life.' And I go, 'It's as easy as that?!' And he said, 'Yeah, it's as easy as that.' And he got it right. So 'Resurrection' and the biographical 'Made in Hell,' 'Locked and Loaded,' 'Silent Screams,' 'Cyberworld,' 'Drive' . . . all of these things are things

Fin Costello/Redferns

that have happened to me, directly. It's a very personal record from a lyrical aspect."

Prodded to get even more personal, Rob opens the door a bit on the state of his love life. "It's no different than anybody else's. I mean, gay people have the same kinds of ups and downs as everybody else. We have our good times and we have our bad. It's exactly the same as everybody's walks of life. I think by nature, I'm a loner, a lone wolf. I always have been. A lot of musicians are that way. It's not a selfish streak, but it's something close to a selfish streak. The only marriage we have is with our music. It's great to have somebody in your life as a partner, but what we do is so unusual and it demands such an intense part of your life emotionally and psychologically, it's tough. It's really tough to have an ongoing relationship. So I haven't had that many long relationships, and it isn't something I encourage myself to look for."

Indeed Rob has hinted elsewhere about turmoil and dissatisfaction at how things have gone with respect to his love life. Quipping that "love is God's trick," he has also said that he's had a fair share of being used, such as through heterosexual and even married men walking on the wild side so to speak, but not being all that sincere or open about their intentions. He's also lamented that living in this manly metal world, his "gaydar" hardly ever went off. Furthermore, he's said his sexual activity has waned somewhat as he gets older, and that he really wouldn't mind fathering a child someday before this whole strange trip is over.

But as with many A-type personalities, career provides solace. "I don't really feel like I've lost out or have missed out on anything because my main relationship is with my music. That's the thing that keeps me going, and I strive with it. Plus, I'm an extremely possessive person. And I'm a smotherer. I smother people to death, and that's not a very cool characteristic that I'm happy with myself about. But I recognize that's who I am, and I try to work on those things. So I try not to get too much into people's faces, but I'm a demanding person. I expect people to do 100 percent for me. And if they don't do 100 percent I get very fucking pissed off. I see things in a very simple, logical way. I don't understand how people have problems with things that need to be done. I don't like stupid things that go wrong. If you are with me, then I expect you to know what to do. That's just my character. I'm very forceful about everything revolving around my music and I demand the best."

This must make being in the studio with Halford a scary proposition. "No," laughs Rob. "I'm dead easygoing. But if you make the slightest fuck-up, I have a really short temper. And if you get one of my looks [laughs] . . . I only have to look at people and they go, 'Oh fuck' and that's enough. But I'm pretty reasonable in the studio. I do have my prima donna moments, but they are directed at myself. If I can't get right what I have to get right, I get really pissed off at myself. Because I can't understand that — all these years later, why I can't get a note right? I hear the playback and I

go, 'That fucking sucks; why can't I do it?' That's why I have people like Roy Z going, 'Calm down, Rob, you'll get it, take it easy, it will all work out.' That's just another fault of mine. But that's directed at me. But yeah, I've got an ego. I've got what I feel is an important, positive ego. I'm OK with people as long as they do what needs to be done. And I think that's the minimum you can ask of this environment, because there are a lot of responsibilities involved. I don't like to let people down, and I like to give them the best."

No rituals or environment enhancements in the studio for the Metal God, either. "No, nothing. I'd go in there and Roy Z would say, 'Do you want me to turn the lights down?' and I'd say, 'No, if you turn the lights down, I won't be able to see my lyrics.' 'Do you want any josh sticks?' No, I just go up to the mic and I put my headphones on, and I close my eyes and I sing. All I have to do is close my eyes and that's it for me."

With respect to assembling the Halford band (the aforementioned Patrick Lachman and Metal Mike on guitars, Ray Riendeau from Two on bass, and Riot technician Bobby Jarzombek on drums), Rob notes "I do screen them through some other people first, because there is just too much for me to wade through. But once done, I wanted it understood from the get-go, that this isn't just a one-off deal. Just because it's Halford, I don't want people to say, 'And this year Halford has so-and-so on guitar and so-and-so on drums.' I want them to stick with me because this is great. It sounds good, we play well, we're good mates, we've got a lot more work to do, let's stay together. And on that understanding, that's it."

Of the audition process for Halford, Rob says, "It wasn't that many, because I was looking for the cream of the crop, maybe 12, 15. They were all from America, apart from Mike, who is from Poland originally, and now lives in New Jersey. Even though my base of operation . . . where I live and everything else comes out of London, with the Rod Smallwood group, I spend time between homes in California, the U.K., and Amsterdam. I don't know what it is, but I just feel better in this part of the world, North America, just circumstantially. So that's what I did, just looked for the best, and when I heard Mike and these guys, I said it feels right, pay attention to what they are doing, and they have the look, because I had videotapes, let's get them on the phone, let's have lunch, let's talk, let's make sure nobody is sticking needles in their arms or doing stupid things like that. And once we got all that sorted, it was, 'Let's go guys, let's start writing, see what happens.' And the music just flowed; it just poured out.

"What I did was, before I actually said let's get together and this is the day we start writing, I said, 'Look at what you've got. If there's anything you want to bring in that you've got, bring it in. But what I'd like you to do is start fresh, put a new head on, we're making a metal album. You know who I am, you know where I'm from, don't be worried about looking at everything that I've done and picking up a

Ross Halfin/Idols

guitar and playing a riff. You play me a riff that you've always wanted to play for Rob Halford.' And so when we came and sat down to write, they brought a good chunk of stuff. Having said that, everything that we've got, to the best of my knowledge, is fresh, it's brand new. At the end of each session, Pat would go back home, and Mike would go back to his hotel room, and they would just keep playing all night and they would come in the next day and say 'This is what I came up with at three o'clock this morning,' and we patched it all together."

"It was basically Rob," affirms guitarist Metal Mike, on Halford's choices for bandmates. "His manager John Baxter found the best he could and then he gave that to Rob. Rob listened to everybody and he said, 'These are the guys we should bring.' And this took probably over two years; it wasn't easy. You have not only the changing of styles . . . even when myself and Halford hooked up, they already knew they wanted to go metal, back to Rob's world. Rob was ready to go back to metal. There were a lot of guys sending all kinds of nonsense in and most of that didn't even pass John's hands. And the best guys ended up being in the Halford band."

Roy Z spoke of his involvement in the record in early January of 2000, indicating that by that point, drums were done, overdubs were in progress, and mixing had been slated for February and March. "On some of it I've provided full songs, but most of the time if I hear something I'll lend a bit here and there, do arrangements. Basically I'm just kind of steering the whole thing, making sure it's what it needs to be, you know? So it's kind of like I'm arranging and Halford is letting me steer the ship. I'm basically your utility guy. Wherever you need me to go, I'll go. The music we are coming up with for the most part sounds like classic Halford-era Priest. There's a little bit of his newer stuff in there, a little bit from the *Painkiller* era, and a very little bit of the Fight stuff, but that is the stuff I am trying to avoid, myself. I'm just steering the whole thing towards the killer classic stuff. There are a couple a kind of ballady things, one that has the same elements as 'Beyond the Realms of Death.'"

Contrasting working with Halford versus working with Bruce Dickinson (who co-vocals with Rob on "The One You Love to Hate"), Roy says "in a general sense, they are similar. But they each have individual characteristics that makes them who they are. But it's the same type of mindset. You have to basically be ready,

because they are old pros. They've got it down. You have to constantly be on your toes. In terms of workload, it depends what you're going for. If you are going for a big, big tapestry kind of thing like what we did with *Chemical Wedding* — where we were just coloring and coloring and coloring — sometimes you have to take colors out and put another one in, and that takes longer. Whereas with this, there is less of that and just more straight-up metal. My approach is that hey, I just want to make it rock like Priest. There might be a little bit of modern stuff in there, but if I'm going to work with Rob Halford, I want it to be metal, and I want it to sound like what he is known for.

"I'm always trying cool studio stuff, and whatever makes it to the final cut, who knows? I'm always trying all kinds of wacky ideas. Artists humor me and let me try my little things. I don't know what is actually going to make it on the record. All along he had Bob Marlette working with him, for the longest time. And then I got involved after Bob, and then there was talk of me working with Tom Allom. And maybe Attie Bauw was going to get in there too, the guy that did the Fight record. But in the end, we did some demos together, and decided that I was the right guy and I could handle the job on my own."

Added Roy, with respect to the Halford/Dickinson duet on "The One You Love to Hate," "They're both here at the studio right now, at the same time. You know that Bruce is a champion for Halford and they've been talking quite a lot lately. I've kind of made a bridge there, and now they have a good relationship. I had a hand and Bruce had a big hand in bringing him into Sanctuary, and I guess he's already firmed up tour dates with Maiden."

Indeed, *Resurrection* would emerge on Sanctuary's short-lived metal imprint Metal Is,

with the band backing up Maiden inside a package that would variously include stablemates Queensryche and Entombed as well. "You know, me and Bruce are so alike," mused Rob of the tag team, which, at one point, almost included Queensryche's Geoff Tate for a proposed project called the Three Tremors. "We've both traveled such similar journeys and I think we have, to some extent, similar personalities. We're both very outgoing and both very direct and blunt and honest about the things that we say and do. We both love what we do. We're both very spontaneous and we're always looking at all the possibilities, looking at exciting moments with respect to things that have never been done before. Like, for example, doing a duet for the first time ever. And that's about it, really. We're friends and

I'm sure we'll get even closer on this tour. I admire him as a singer and as a songwriter and a performer, and this is going to be a blast. And of course with Geoff, this is a singer's dream come true to have Halford, Dickinson and Tate under the same roof each night. And I love Entombed also."

"We even went so far as to taking pictures and everything and having meetings," said Rob, elaborating on the shelved Three Tremors concept. "And it was all on a full-on green light situation, and then suddenly, everything started to be kind of difficult, namely because of the schedules involved. I know Bruce was busy wanting to get into his next solo record, because Maiden is taking some time off now. Geoff is busy with some more Queensryche material. I was straight into the studio finishing the work for the double live CD. And literally, in a few days time, I'm going into rehearsal, so it was just a calendar conflict."

No writing was done, but "there were just discussions about what we would do together. And I hope that when the time is right and there is no conflict in each of our schedules, I think we should get together and do something, because I think it's going to be a great moment. We all agreed that Roy Z would be producing, and to some extent play with us because Roy is a tremendous guitar player, and that's about as far as we got. We certainly did not want to put together an all-star lineup, because we just wanted to keep the focus on the three singers and just have a really solid band to work with night after night. I think it will be a great metal experience because the things that we discussed and the way we would have created the live moment would have been very spectacular. I can only say that when the time happens, it will be an amazing thing to experience. To my mind, it was very much an extension of what people saw with the Three Tenors, basically taking that format and recreating it in the metal world."

Metal Mike — still officially with Halford, but also with Painmuseum — agrees with Rob and Roy that the plan all along with Halford was to capture a past sense of glory. "It was centered around Roy Z bringing *Screaming for Vengeance* and *British Steel* in. Rob doesn't drink, but we were having a few brews and listening to those saying, 'We want to do something like that; that would be cool. Check that

out, man! We've got to go back there. How cool is that?!' And we just needed Rob to go back to the headspace he was in with Priest. Because again, there was that area of confusion with Two. I can't talk too much about this, because I wasn't there during that time. But the whole Two thing — I mean, what the fuck was that?! I mean, this is not Rob Halford. I mean, it's OK to experiment but this is not the Rob Halford that the fans want. So we were like, 'Rob, think about *Painkiller* and what was going on.' 'Yeah, this is what's going on.' And I was like, 'OK, this is how Rob is feeling,' and I would try to take that feeling from Rob and put it into the guitar riffs."

"Rob is funny," added Mike regarding Halford's listening habits. He's got all kinds of stuff. He would have a Tool album, an old Machine Head album. I would always bring him a bunch of metal, like early Amon Amarth; we would dig on that, In Flames, Soilwork. Rob doesn't listen to old '80s CDs. He's always up on the cutting edge, discovering new music. But at the same time, like any great artist, we would go into a 99-cent store and buy a Hulk Hogan CD and just laugh about it. So it's the ability to listen to anything.

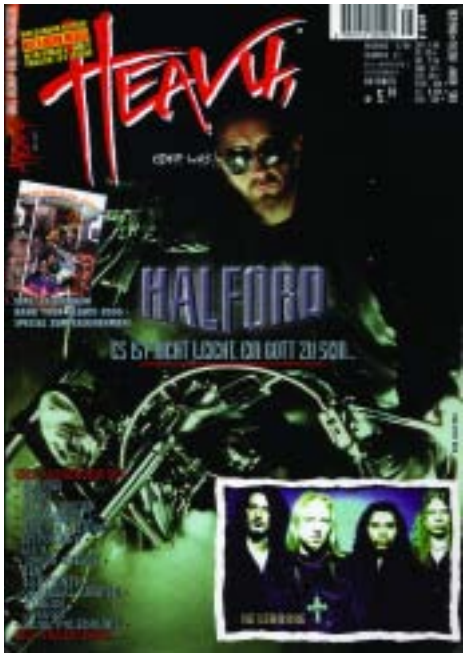
"I think that everybody involved had their own song ideas, the way they wrote. Roy was incredible, because Roy could take a riff that I would bring that would sound like an old school Loudness riff, which was . . . you know, that's where I was coming from. I kind of grew up on Loudness and Accept and I would bring those kinds of things in. Because that's what speaks metal to me. I love Carcass and I love later Death records, so I had a little bit of that stuff in there too. Pat wasn't about that. He was very Pantera-influenced, more of a modern-type feel, very concerned with what would be cool, when people heard it. And I don't give a fuck what people think is cool. I want to do what I want to do. If people don't like it, personally, it could be Rob's decision or Roy's as the producer. I understand my role in the organization. But I would bring all kinds of stuff to the table. I didn't care if I brought 100 songs. If one of them stays and it's a great song, then I've done my job."

With regard to Bob Marlette, Mike figures, "a lot of stuff I hear that he does just sounds like parts of other bands' songs. I would get demos, and it was like, 'Well, here's an Alice in Chains part or, OK, this is from the *Shout at the Devil* record.' So I was like, whatever. I think that's

what happens when you become strictly a songwriter to the stars, you know? You don't go out there and pound beers with your friends down on the streets and talk about some record. You fucking go to a Billboard party and drink martinis and listen to a CD on the way home because you've got no other time to do anything.

"There's no balls to it. It's just like, 'Four bars of this; let's ProTools to four bars of that.' And where's the song? If we're talking about metal, man . . . and I think that's what happens. If you write songs for Celine Dion, I don't care what you do, man, you can whistle the whole way through. But it really pisses me off when people are trying to write metal for metal icons, whether it's Rob or Alice Cooper. But again, I must say that 'Silent Screams' is a killer song; he really brought that off. But I'm sure he had another guitar player do some of the parts. But when people bring in stuff to metal with all these bullshit parts and people just waiting for a paycheck, it kind of pisses me off. Because I didn't get into this to make money. I make money because my heart is into it and it shows. But you get all the studio sausages playing for the dollar — that's not what the scene is about."

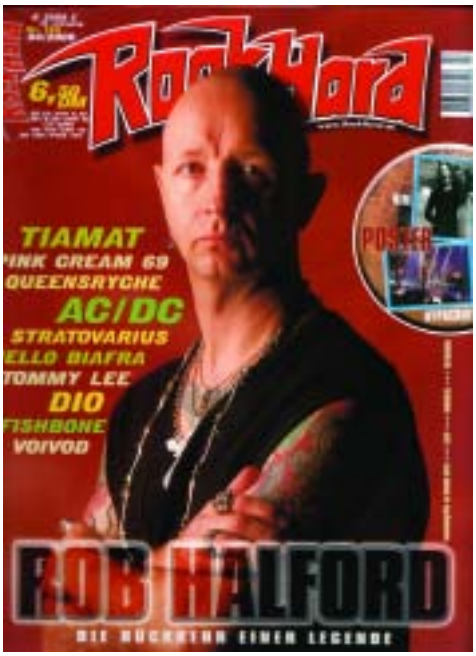
Despite the sleek sound of *Resurrection*, a fair bit of sound-searching took place. Says Mike, "Silver Cloud Studios, where we recorded, has this roomful of crazy amps and gear, like Laneys that belonged to Tony Iommi, and early '60s Fenders, and we spent a lot of time tweaking the sounds. We were like, 'Let's just get to it and play,' but looking back at those times, it did make a difference and it was worth it. It taught us how to



be patient. But we didn't spend a ridiculous amount of time on it. We spent a good amount of time cutting drum tracks and, believe it or not, Bobby recorded 25 songs for that record. There's another Halford record lying around in some vault somewhere. The strongest stuff made it, and there is stuff lying around that other people might think is stronger or not, depending on who wrote the song.

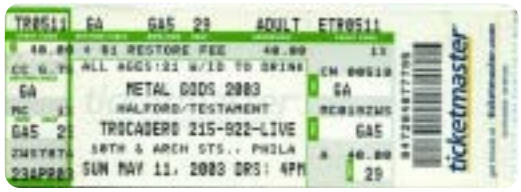
"But you're right, sound-wise, *Resurrection* is all quite uniform. There might be different songs arrangement-wise, but the sounds were pretty much the same. Once we got a good guitar tone, we stuck with it throughout the album and kind of colored it with some other amps underneath it to bring out different chorus parts."

Prompted for a bit of a psychological profile of Halford, Mike explains, "Rob — and I've never heard anybody say anything else — is a

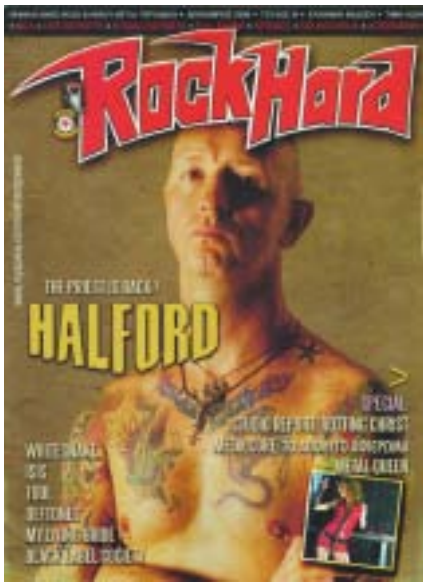


gentleman. And he's incredible in that he lets you do what you're supposed to do. He says, 'I hired you as a guitar player — you do what you do.' And then if he's not liking something in your performance, he'll speak with the producer. But he's not going to take you into the hallway and scream at you for playing the wrong note. And that's just the way to do it professionally and for everybody to do a great album. He understands the process, obviously, after so many records, so he's extremely inspired to do this. And you'll be presenting him with the songs, and he gives you his full attention. He wants to hear everything you have to say, and makes you feel really good as a musician when you're doing something so intimate on a music level with a legend like Rob. Which makes you want to do the best job you can. And Rob is very supportive. I would do my crazy guitar solos and Rob would just stand behind me, and I would look around and he'd be laughing on the couch. It's like, 'You've got to stop playing like that, Metal Mike.' And then we'd go out and eat something. But I really, really enjoyed it. I loved everything that was going on, but I didn't really appreciate to the fullest, as I can now, after seeing other musical situations and how they take. The Halford thing was, so far, the most all-around professional thing I've ever been a part of."

"Rob really likes the writing process," continues Mike. "I think it's actually his most favorite part, that initial spark of interest where you go, 'Yeah, yeah, do that riff again!' Sometimes we would sit down and do songs and Rob would say, 'No, no, turn that riff around. Play that thing backwards. Six times. All right, that's it!' And he'll take a CD of it and work with it on his own time. And nobody will really know what the lyrics are, until we go, 'Well,



Register before game. Must be present to win
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10
HALFORD
FEATURING ROB HALFORD FROM JUDAS PRIEST
93X
Adv tix $17 Door $20 Doors 7 Show 8 • 21+ show



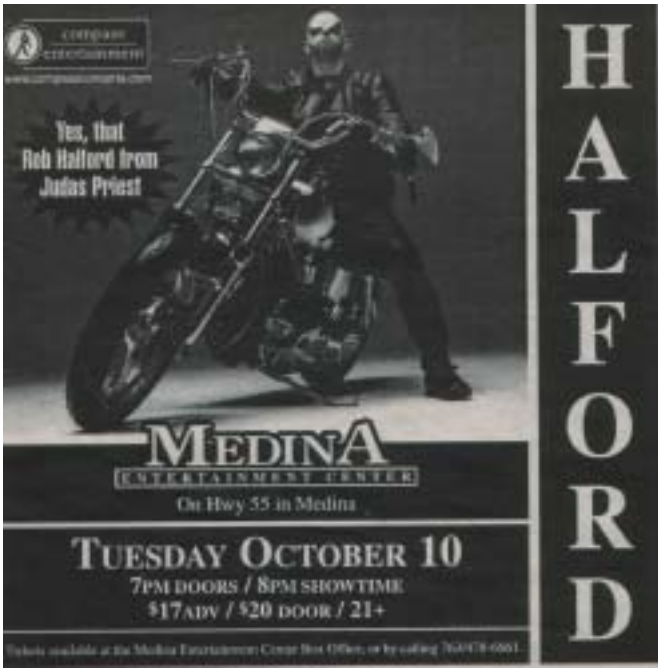
Rob, are you happy with the song's structure?' And he'll say 'Yep, that's what I need.' And he'll just come in really focused with his computer notebook and say, 'All right, this is what it has to be.' He needs to work on his own time. You can see it on the record — Rob has the ability to do incredible lyric work. And when he sings, everybody listens."

You could feel the excitement around the Halford band out on the tour trail. The amount of press the band drew had to be three times the Two situation, the album had sold respectably (as of February '02, about 60,000 copies), and onstage, the guys looked like a feisty, combative unit, driving Priest fans to delirium with tough-as-nails renditions of deep album classics such as "Stained Class." The fact that they were a backup on a stadium tour made it all the more interesting. Fans were a potent combination of curious, respectful, supportive and most importantly, on time, filling the seats well in advance of Maiden — frankly, helping fill those seats *for* Maiden.

From the road in Europe, Rob expressed gratitude for *Resurrection* winning the *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles* critics poll for top album of 2000. "Well first of all, I'm thrilled and honored to be given that kind of award. It's a very satisfying feeling. Obviously there was an enormous amount of effort and blood, sweat and tears from everybody involved in making *Resurrection*. . . . I accept this not only for myself but for Pat and Mike and Ray and Bobby and Roy Z and everybody else who's been a part of making the whole thing a huge success. And of course, I'm in the company of a lot of other great metal albums that have come out this year. So I'm very flattered and I

feel very, very cool about the whole thing. . . . It's really nice when you get this kind of recognition. It's just a nice feeling that not only have you made a connection with the fans, but also with people from that side of the business, the critics, who obviously listen to an enormous amount of material. And to choose me amongst all of those others, it's just a really great feeling."

"They're all very positive," adds Rob, accurately summing up fan and critical response to the record, while using an amusing amount of time-honored Halford hyperbole arguably appropriate to the record at hand. "We've been going out, as you know, we kicked off playing pretty much every piece of music off this record. Each song still has enormous strength. I will tell you that the major feedback we get from the stage when we're playing is definitely the opening cut, and then 'Made in Hell' and 'Locked and Loaded.' 'Cyberworld' is a massive hit here in Europe, and so is 'Nightfall.' 'Silent Screams' is a track that gets a spectacular reaction every single night we play it. So there isn't really a moment on the record that I'm not feeling as strong about as I was before . . . We all go through the kind of contemplative situation after we finish recording. But with the time and energy we spent on each song, we were able to make a record with really strong tracks from beginning to end. Those ones I mentioned are particularly exciting, simply because of the reaction they are creating. It was exciting to start up in Canada, and I would love to come back now. If I can get on a plane and come back to play some Canadian dates, I would do that, simply because we started off up there, and just by the nature of the beast [laughs], you know,



bands grow, and there's an enormous amount of confidence and mileage that has occurred since those opening dates up in Toronto and Montreal. All I can tell everybody up there is what you experienced from those first few moments of the Halford band, when we come back, you'll see a growth that is tenfold."

"We're still doing 'Stained Class,'" continues Halford, on the subject of the set list at this point in the tour, essentially November of 2000. "We did put 'Jawbreaker' into the set, which is kind of a surprise. We're still doing 'Running Wild,' 'Tyrant,' 'Genocide,' 'Breaking the Law' and 'Metal Gods.' We've been having some pretty wild moments with 'Breaking the Law.' Since we've gotten to Europe, it's like a capella; the band plays it as an instrumental and I just hold the mic out and it's just sing-along time with the Metal God. It's just terrific. But we've been thinking about possibly bringing in some other Priest material as we progress through the European tour. 'Desert Plains' possibly, maybe 'Screaming for Vengeance,' possibly 'Devil's Child.' These are things we've been throwing around hanging out backstage. Because as I said before, everybody in the band is such a huge Priest fan, and everybody has such a big understanding of the Priest music, we can literally go out and play whatever we choose. But we want to try to keep the set balanced and interesting with a real hard edge. I know the guys have certain favorites — Pat and Mike, being guitar players, have tracks they would like to get their teeth stuck into."

All makes for a helluva live album, and along it came, less than a year after their debut album, Halford issuing *Live Insurrection*, an explosive two-CD package stuffed with all sorts of surprise gems.

"It has a cool connection to the first Halford studio release, *Resurrection*," says Rob about the title, picked for what was even more of a Priest-pointed album from Halford's tattooed Judas-slayers. "Also, 'insurrection' implies creating a kind of rowdy and intense reaction to what this band definitely does on the stages of the world, so I just think it's a great title to carry people onto the next step. This is just a holding pattern as we go on to the second studio release. And for the cover, that's me onstage at Santiago, Chile, and I'm just standing there holding the Chilean flag. It's a picture taken from the stage out to the crowd, and it's just a great metal moment, a very unified moment of Halford and those crazy metal maniacs."

In fact, the cover art was changed at the last minute, after Halford decided the original idea — an empty hall, post-show, strewn with garbage and beer bottles — had no class.

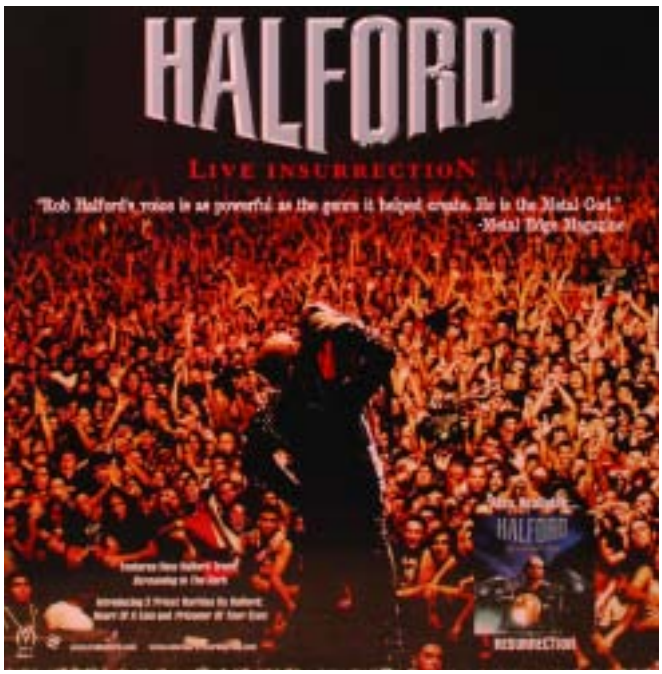
Addressing the highly entertaining track listing of the album — 28 songs, obscurities everywhere — Halford says, "I really think live CDs are special, because for those of us who go

to the shows, we like to close our eyes and go back again. And I wanted to make a live CD that is going to be as potent and as strong and as enjoyable this year as it will be five or ten years from now. Because of the great legacy and heritage of metal that I've been involved with for 30 years, it's important for me to make something that lasts. And I feel that this particular live metal CD is one that will stand the test of time and people can play over and over again.

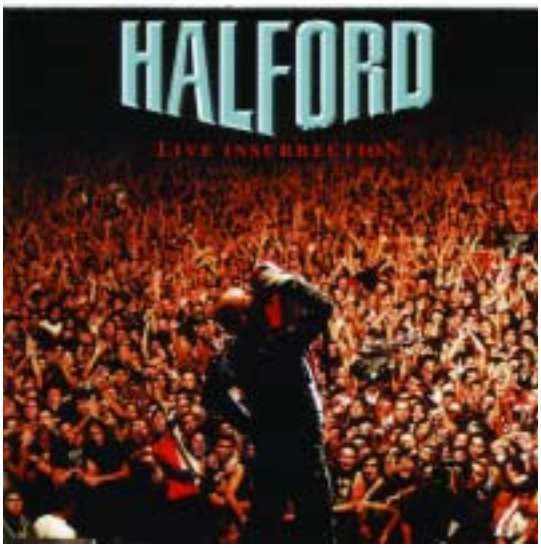
"I love this CD because of the way it leaves you feeling. By the end of it, if you've got the metal guts to sit down and listen to it from start to finish, it leaves you mentally and emotionally drained, because it just takes you everywhere in life. It's got great balance and great continuity and flow and it really is a wonderful metal journey, because you are literally going with me through almost 30 years of my life and my music.

"I look forward to every single show I do with the guys in the Halford band. Because I know that they have the same love for metal that I have, and that they want to give everything they can give at that particular moment that they walk out onstage, again, the same way I do. And now I just feel — we've been together for longer than two years; we've just bonded so deeply, musically and personally — that it's just a great feeling to be in the company of these guys, not only as great musicians, but as good close friends. And of course, because I've been in the metal world now for 30 years this March, I've seen and experienced so much in metal, that it takes a lot to get me fired up, in the respect that it's very easy to get jaded and cynical in the rock 'n' roll business. I need to work with people who are hungry and ambitious and have all the right attitudes in place, musically and personally, and that's what the guys in the Halford band have got and do for me night after night."

IF YOU'VE GOT THE METAL GUTS TO SIT DOWN AND LISTEN TO IT FROM START TO FINISH, IT LEAVES YOU MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DRAINED, BECAUSE IT JUST TAKES YOU EVERYWHERE IN LIFE.



Renditions on the live spread are faithful to the originals, without too much sloppiness either, to the point where the band got some stick for alleged deep doctoring of the original tapes.



"I've always been conservative when it comes to making rearrangements of songs," explains Rob. "Because as a listener of other people's music, I like to hear what I expect. However, 'Light Comes out of Black' is a track that from a vocal point of view, I totally reworked, only in the respect that I sung it in a much higher octave. I believe I did that also with 'Sad Wings.' But the rest I wanted to keep as close to the real thing as possible. I get frustrated and a little bit pissed off when I hear one of my favorite songs reworked. I think if you remix something, and you rearrange it and it's released in that respect, that's all well and done, approachable and appreciable. But I'm a stickler for leaving good things as they are. One of my mottos is, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'

"The duet with Bruce Dickinson is quite unique, because to the best of my knowledge, we only played that song once in concert live, and that was with Bruce. Because I obviously felt that the only way I thought that would work is singing it with Bruce. So that's what we did that day in London. And while we were in Japan, I think we threw in 'Light Comes out of Black' and 'Sad Wings of Destiny' and 'Hell's Last Survivor.' Those two tracks particularly, I think we only played a couple of times in Japan, because the Japanese had those two tracks on their release."

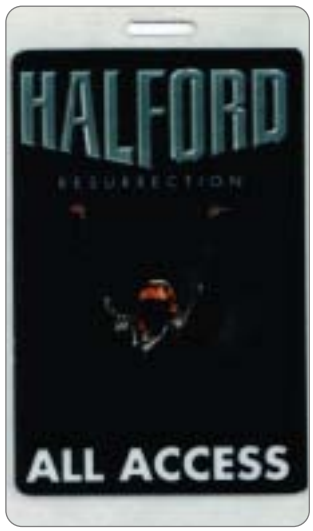
Tacked on the end of *Live Insurrection* is a trio of studio tracks, two old (and churlish) Priest rarities redone — "Prisoner of Your Eyes" and "Heart of a Lion" — plus something a bit more tantalizing, a new Halford track, "Screaming in the Dark."

Says Rob, "The great thing about the Halford band is that we made a pledge at the beginning of this whole experience to work together and stay together as long as we felt that we could make this great music. So the first experiences we had writing and recording the first record, and then into the touring cycle, were just the first openings of what we hope is going to be a long trek. So it's the same people on those songs. 'Screaming in the Dark' is a little metal morsel for the direction that we intend to go in on the next studio release. We're really going to turn it up a notch, get more fierce and more intense. Both of the Priest tracks are kind of interesting. I've always liked these two songs and wondered whether I would get an opportunity to cover them with this band. And it was only after the experience of

being together for two years now that I thought it would be interesting to see our interpretation of these two songs. The songs have never been recorded or released until this moment. They are both from the mid-'80s — 'Heart of a Lion' was covered by Racer X. And I thought I would just wait until the right moment to rework those songs with a stronger approach.

"We did them in Silver Cloud Studios, in Burbank, in L.A. We laid down the bulk of the recordings in the Sanctuary Studios in London, and we just did a few overdubs in Silver Cloud. We were out on the road working in Europe doing headlining dates and also working with Maiden, and we just found ourselves in the Sanctuary offices one day, and we just came up with the idea of doing these two tracks, including 'Screaming in the Dark,' and the studio was free and we just ran in there and literally put the songs down in an afternoon."

"We recorded practically every show we did on the world tour," continues Rob, moving on to the construction of the live album. "We took ADATs with us, and when it actually came to going through the shows to pick the great moments that . . . was a real labor of love. This band delivers night after night in a live format, so it was a hard choice to say this one track was a better performance than this other performance. I listened to every one of the shows that we played on the *Resurrection* tour, but I didn't want to give away the identity of the venue or location that each song came from. What we've done is given everybody a taste from all around the world. All I will say is that there are cuts on



this double live CD that are from America, Europe and Japan. And I've done that simply because I feel that the metal community is so well connected globally, that we're just thrilled to be able to go onstage anywhere in the world and have that contact."

Fight gets revisited as well, with Halford renditions of "Into the Pit," "Nailed to the Gun" and "Life in Black." "This band has an extraordinary opportunity to go out and play a vast cross section of catalog that I've recorded over the years. So we can step from place to place. One minute we're in our own world, and then the other minute we're into the world of Priest, and then the world of Fight, and at one point, we step into the world of Scorpions because we do a cover of 'Blackout' that's exclusive to the Japanese release. And the bonus, of course, is the one new studio track

IT'S DELICATE BETWEEN KEN AND GLENN AND IAN AND ME, AND THERE IS NO TALK ABOUT REUNIONS OR ANYTHING. WE'RE JUST SLOWLY PATCHING TOGETHER OUR RELATIONSHIP.

which leads you into the next Halford studio CD. And as well you get the rare Priest songs."

And the seismic heavy metal events don't stop there — as mentioned, *Resurrection*'s Japanese bonus tracks are nestled within the live set, here for the curious to discover. "I suppose 'Hell's Last Survivor' is just my interpretation of my attitude toward surviving in rock 'n' roll, that there are many pitfalls and bad things that happen to you. It's a tough place to be and you have to be resilient and work hard to stay on course. Lyrically, that's the direction. 'Sad Wings' is just a reflection on my past, all the great moments with Priest, wondering about the things I did then, wondering about the things that are happening now with Priest. It's just an observation of my moments with that great metal band. The music is extremely powerful, with a lot of energy and fire in the attack and the attitude."

Still, as much as people enjoy the album, a discussion of it has always included quips and jabs about its heavily doctored feel, Rob not able to shake the shackles of all that *Unleashed in the Studio* chatter. Admits Mike, "A lot of stuff was from live takes, obviously. We went into the studio and overdubbed things here and there, as in every record. It's the commitment to the quality of it. We're not going to release something that sounds like shit and charge people money for it. Saying this is live, it's the way it's meant to be, that just means that the band didn't have a budget for it [laughs]. So there were some things that were fixed, because we were already recording the bonus studio tracks. Some things were done in rehearsal, like 'The One You Love to Hate,' with Bruce. We recorded that in London, during soundchecks and just used those takes. The thing is, we used the same amps throughout the whole entire tour and the same guitars, so the sound didn't change from show to show as drastically. And everything was recorded. I don't know, man, how much money was spent on all the ADATs and tapes and ProTools systems, because every show was recorded. So yeah, some stuff was fixed in the studio here and there. But it wasn't something that was just done from scratch, that's for sure."

At this point, Rob's relationship with the Priest guys seemed to be somewhat thawing. "It's stupid," sighs Rob, reflecting on his closing the door of communication after that fateful day in Toronto. "I don't know what it is. Have you ever been in a thing where you've had a fight with someone and you didn't speak with them for weeks? I'll tell you what it is about that. If you have a best friend, like I have with Ken and Glenn and Ian . . . when I spoke to

them, like over a year ago now it was just as though it was yesterday. So time is immaterial. I mean you might dwell on it and go, 'Look at all this fucking time we've lost.' But you can't look at it that way. What you look at this now, and next . . . whatever is what's going to be next. It's delicate between Ken and Glenn and Ian and me, and there is no talk about reunions or anything. We're just slowly patching together our relationship and we'll see where it takes us from that point on."

"It was up to me to fix, because I screwed up in the first place," admitted Rob. "So I wrote them a very personal private letter, and it opened the key to us talking to each other again. I'm very happy that that's happened and we are at least able to pick up the phone and casually hang out with each other when I'm in England. So the friendship's being rebuilt and that's wonderful because they're like brothers to me. I spent 20 years of my life with them, and I'm happy to say we're on speaking terms and it feels really good."

Rob added that at this point, he still had not listened to *Jugulator*, keeping a promise he had made to himself when the record was issued. "Yes, oh what is up with me?! Shouldn't I listen to it while I'm in Toronto and get all that clutter out of the way? There is just something about Toronto that is in me — things happen here."

"It's just too difficult for me to listen to the band when I'm not in it," mused Rob, "and that's nothing to do with taking a shot at Ripper. I'm grateful that he is in the band because he's keeping the band alive. But I just can't listen to it. It's just psychological. I should just put it on and listen to the fucking thing, but then if I do, people will say, 'Well, have you heard it?' And I'll go 'yeah,' and then you'll go, 'What do you think?' And I don't want to do that. I don't want to be put in that situation. I just love all the things that I've done with the band and I'm happy to be a part of that great legacy, and that's all. You want to treat it with respect, because that's what it deserves."

"Define strange," laughs Rob when asked about strange tales from the road, gifts proffered perhaps. "It doesn't matter, wherever I go in the world, people are kind enough and fun enough to give me gifts and objects that are part of my past and what I'm doing now. At one point I'll have to open up an S&M leather shop [laughs] if I get any more whips and chains — I'm running out of space here. But I've got a vast collection of all of those toys and accoutrements. It's a fun thing and it always makes me smile, and they always get put to good use as well [laughs]. We had some of the most bizarre things thrown onstage, from snakes and various other dead animals to sneakers. But all I'll say about today's generation, they're less inventive than when I was with Priest, particularly in the '80s."

The presentation of the Halford show also involved some unscripted moments. "It always seems that, no matter where you go in the world, there's always a point when the generators are going to blow, or the fuses are going to go, and you crash into the first song and ten seconds later everything goes off. It's ironic

Ross Halfin/Idols

that on the very last show that we did on this *Resurrection* tour, which was at the Rock in Rio festival in front of half a million people, we used an intro track from a great movie that I love called *Gladiator*. And it's pretty much the same for a lot of bands when you use an intro tape — the lights go down, and the crowd begins to roar and the intro tape starts. Well, we use a CD, and for the first time ever in these dates, the CD decided to skip. Now, I have a very short fuse when it comes to things like that. You know, I'm one of these guys that can handle a plane crash, but if someone leaves the top of the toothpaste off, I go all ballistic. So I was just literally venting and going crazy on the side of the stage because this track was skipping like a CD skips. It was just so ironic that of all of the dates that we could have had a technical problem, it would be on the last date and at one of the biggest shows I've ever played in my life — it was certainly the biggest show that Ray and Bobby and Pat had ever played. But you just bite your lip and you just walk on there as if nothing's happened. And of course, there's also been the odd moment on the last tour where we walk out and I go into the first line of "Resurrection" and my mic hasn't been switched on. And that's a bit like being whacked on the back of the head with a baseball bat. Because those first few moments coming down onstage are pretty intense. I walk out there so psyched up and focused, that when your mic doesn't work, it's a bit like walking into the ring with Mike Tyson and you're not wearing boxing gloves.

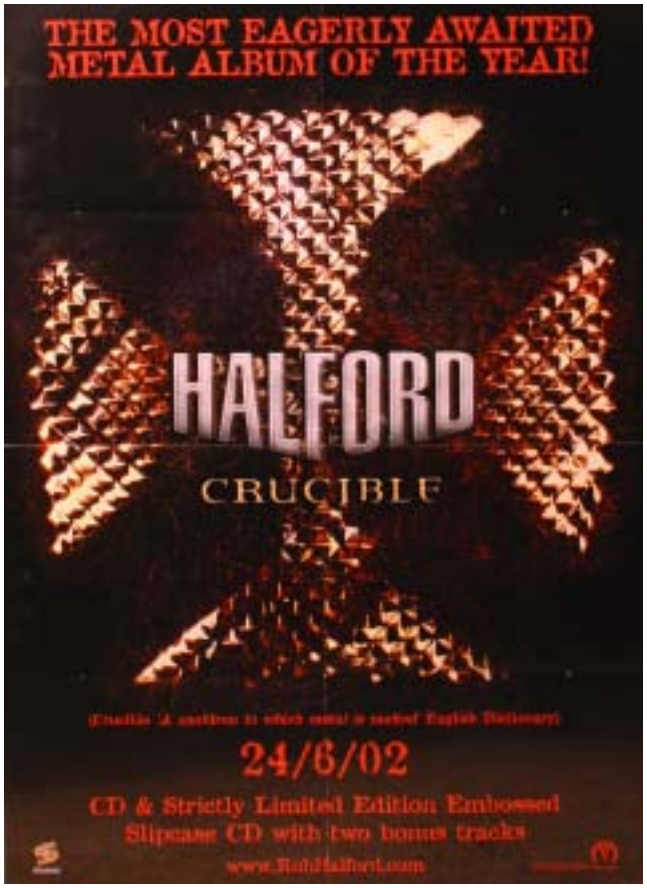
"And actually, in Europe, when the PA broke once, it turned out that everything went down except Mike's stack and Mike proceeded to

have his little Hendrix-esque moment, trying to entertain the crowd with as many notes that he can throw into a riff as possible. You just kind of have to bite the bullet and hope that people are working frantically to try and fix the problem. Anything can happen, but you try not to think about the consequences. You try and stay focused on what you're doing."

And sometimes the Metal God himself is to blame. "Oh yes, I'll be singing a song and I'll sing the same verse twice or I'll stumble and bumble over my lyrics. I kind of think that's cool, because when mistakes happen onstage, it shows that you're human. And it takes away that sterile night-after-night feeling that you don't want. You want it to be spontaneous. You want it to be chaotic. You want control of the songs, but that's the magic of five people working together at that moment — literally anything can happen. So there's always that kind of edgy rock 'n' roll nervousness as you go out and play. The thing about me is that when I'm onstage I'm never that comfortable because I never know what's going to happen next."

"Oh, we've been through the rigors of that," adds Halford, with respect to the pranks and pratfalls on the road to rock, "going into each other's hotel rooms and turning the furniture upside down, people getting wrapped up in gaffer's tape. Again, it's just part of what you do in rock 'n' roll to let off steam. The video cameras and the digital cameras are always out at the crazy moments. There's a lot of infamy that goes on on the tour buses of the Halford band, just like any other band. It's those kind of moments you can only get when you pay $30 a month at the XXX sites on the worldwide web [laughs].

"That's the great thing about touring; you really don't know what's going to happen one day to the next. We recently came back from Japan, and the Japanese, just by their nature, are very special, very unique in the way they behave and the way they react to the music. I was in a local restaurant around the corner from the hotel that we were staying at in Tokyo. We had finished the show, and I went to have kind of a late-night snack and sat down and I was eating my meal. And I noticed that there were three or four people in the corner that had obviously been to the show and were kind and considerate enough to wait until I was finished eating to come over. But they came over all excited, and then there was a couple with a baby and they insisted that I sign the baby. Now, I've held babies, I've had my pictures taken with babies [laughs], but this is the first time I actually signed one. I mean, I didn't actually physically sign it on the head or anything, but I had signed the T-shirt and the little pants that it was wearing, and we took pictures. Actually also in Japan, there's this guy that shows up at every single performance. I mean he's been coming to see me since I started to work in Japan with Priest. And he's a Japanese Rob Halford clone. He just wears the same stuff that I wear, and he copies the outfits and the movements, and he's usually in the front row and it's a trip, an honor to have that done for you, but it's also amusing."



True to Rob's word about keeping the band together, Halford came back vital and 100 percent intact for a new record in 2002 called *Crucible*. This was a band, and the band was good, the band was snarling and serious.

From the vantage point of the road, the direction of *Crucible* nonetheless seemed to be forming in Rob's mind as a record that should be afforded a level of risk. "I see getting a bit more adventurous in terms of where we're going to take this instrumentally, again just by the dimension of the band growing in these last few months," he noted. "But I still want to focus on really heavy riffs, and I still want to focus on really strong melodic vocal work. I'll still be doing all my searching and researching for lots of cool things to sing about. So I think it will be an extension of *Resurrection*, but it will have an advanced feeling attached to it."

True to that statement, *Crucible* turned out to be a thoughtful, dark album, a weirdly doomy and doomed album in much the same tidy, encapsulated way *A Small Deadly Space* related to *War of Words*. And critical reaction was much the same as well — *Crucible* went over heads. Fans and scribes and everybody was either mildly critical or cautiously on board, venturing that a little more time with the record should have them getting it . . . just you wait and see.

"You know, 21 CDs later, what are you trying to say?" pondered Rob, beginning a bit of a

treatise on *Crucible*'s lyrical direction, one that matches the leaden mood of the record perfectly. "I mean, I sit there with sheets of blank paper, and a bunch of pens and a bunch of dictionaries and rhyming dictionaries and *Roget's Thesaurus* and think, 'What do I do?' *Resurrection* was OK because it was just from the inside. What we did this time was we collected loads and loads of newspapers, almost a year's worth of newspaper headlines and clippings and things for inspiration. So all of these songs really are about what I see going on around me. 'Crucible' is my take on the way religion is used and manipulated in all walks of life. 'One Will' is a great song, and was inspired by watching basketball, which I love. And I wanted to try get this sporting anthemic song, you know, 'One in victory, one in misery, one will take it all.' 'Handing out Bullets' is about the Middle East.

"'Wrath of Gods' is about New York City, September 11, which I never thought I would do, because to try and talk about that horrible incident with some respect was something you just can't do. It just happened. The inspirational moment for me was when they did the six-month-to-the-day memorial with the two lights. I saw all that, and my head just went off and that was my idea. The opening line, 'Twin swords of laser lights blast from the earth' . . . that's what that is, and then I'm going on about everything else. 'Crystal' is about crystal methamphetamine addiction. 'Hearts of Darkness' is about any incident where bands are targeted by groups for supposedly doing things they didn't do, whether it's Reno or whatever. 'Trail of Tears' is about living in San Diego and seeing people coming across the border from walking through the mountains and dying, or getting on rusty old ships in the former Czech Republic and sinking in the Greek Strait. The way people risk their lives for freedom and a better life is just terrible.

"Speaking like this, it all sounds incredibly heavy and doom-laden, but the wonderful thing about metal is that you can use language; the words that we use can bring a message and an idea without it being literal. When you listen to 'Trail of Tears,' that's probably the furthest thing away from your mind; you know, what is this about 'God will look after you but he won't save you' — what does that mean? When you actually talk about it in terms of where it was coming from — myself — it makes sense. So that was it; once Roy and I got the plot to just talk about what we see in the world, it was off and running. But it was still a challenge as much as it ever was."

Looking back on this interesting period within the life of the band Rob said, "I think *Crucible* just reinforced our ideals and our intent, and just showed the great diversity and musicianship that exists in the Halford band. And as much as I've always tried to do with everything that I've been a part of in the recording world, to not be repetitive and to show growth and depth, *Resurrection* was a great relaunch for me back into the world of metal, in a pure sense, and it was greatly received worldwide, obviously. Beyond that, we were determined to follow up with something

that was stronger and a little bit more adventurous in some instances . . . elaborate musically. And I think we achieved that. We set ourselves on a course that we kept to. And it was really welcomed. Obviously your second release is important and valuable; it just sends out a strong message about where you're at and what you're doing. And this is exactly what *Crucible* did for us.

"I think you attach the same sort of mentality to whatever you do, which is that you're giving 200 percent at any moment. I don't think, in all of the things that I've been a part of, I don't have something hanging over my shoulder, looking over and breathing down my neck saying, 'This better be as good as the last one.' I don't think that's a useful climate to work in. I think you just really need to continue to try to do the best you can. This being my 20-something release, the challenge is trying to be fresh and saying something strong and maybe a little bit different. And of course I'm able to do that with this band because of the great talent in it. The musicianship I'm surrounded with is always a great thing for me to define my inspiration from. So when I'm in a room jamming with Mike, when he's coming up with riffs and ideas and things are cranking up, or Bobby is laying down some incredible drumbeats, that's where the fire starts, you know? And that *Crucible* trip was great because it made me feel confident about the potential of a third studio release."

"*Resurrection* — there was a lot of excitement around that album," adds Mike. "Rob was really excited to go back into metal again. Everybody in the band was very excited to be there, because it was the biggest thing that any one of us had ever done. Roy was really excited to produce it, and we were just rolling with the songs, man. We were just killer. It was an incredible record to make. It wasn't an easy album to make, because it had to be a particular style of record for the fans to like it. And it was probably one of the most important records in Rob's career. And it was a lot of fun. And we went on the entire world tour and we made it. We sold a shitload of records.

"And then what happens . . . it's just your typical sophomore record. People start thinking, people start crunching numbers and looking at radio and looking at what their sisters are listening to, what clothes people were wearing on the street, and there was a little confusion, I think. Rob came up with great lyrical content and I think the band really grew musically for it. But the record wasn't as focused as *Resurrection*. I would even say that it was too quick of an involvement for the band. The band grew up too quickly in front of everybody's eyes. Anybody who came into Halford was very gifted musically and talent-wise, and the first album was incredible, but everybody pulled back their playing abilities to some point. Which was great in some ways; it was a killer straight-ahead metal album. Later on it was more like, 'Well, let's just show how advanced the band is.' And there was a lot of stuff on there where maybe songwriting-

wise, there were good songs, but they didn't blow you away in some instances."

"I remember some Sanctuary guys coming in and listening to it," says Mike, when asked about label pressure. "I don't like to get involved in too much of the business thing. I want to play guitar and that's what I do, and I did the best record I could. Personally, I think the label would've wanted a record closer to *Resurrection*. It took them a long time to understand *Crucible*, and I don't even know if they understand it fully right now. So yeah, there was some pressure from Sanctuary to do that. I'm not even so sure that it wasn't pressure so that Rob could have two solid releases so that they could move Rob into Priest, you know? Imagine Rob doing another record that just totally messes up somebody's plan. They're like, 'Wait a minute, this is not what's supposed to happen. This is not the route that Bruce Dickinson took before we put him back in Maiden.' But I'll tell you one thing: that *Crucible* record was a blessing in disguise, because it showed the world that the Halford band and Halford in general has a lot of things to offer the fans. And that gives life to the project, to everybody in the group. It means that if the opportunity or if the demand arises in a few years, we can do another Halford record and not compete with the whole Judas Priest ordeal."

"There was a shitload of confusion before we started," says Mike, on the subject of *Crucible*'s direction. "We went to a couple writing sessions at the Park Manor hotel, in San Diego, and we were just pounding these super-hard fast metal songs. And we would leave the hotel, and Rob would be like, 'This is the greatest shit. This is going to be like *Resurrection* a step up. It makes me feel great. This is going to be fucking killer.' And you know, I don't know what happened, man. Too many band meetings in too many places. But by the time we were recording the record, we only used two or three songs from those sessions. And sometimes we felt we were getting too picky, too artsy. I want to make a fucking metal record. I don't want to be U2, you know? But still man, there are some killer songs on there. But that internal metallic feel you get when you hear a riff with a drum behind it . . . more of that was on *Resurrection*, I think."

Mike says the band bonded even more during the construction of *Crucible*, even spending a fair bit of time at Rob's house, which, he says, is pretty tastefully done. "It's good. I think any rock star would be proud of it [laughs]. Rob is completely . . . we talked about it sometimes. Rob doesn't give a shit about anything like that, putting all the gold records on the wall. It's just a body of work that he does. I think like anybody, that's what's important for him. Rob is not the gold record–hanging, diamond ring–wearing, 'Look what I've done' guy. Rob told me crazy stories, man. Him and I talked a lot throughout the years. He told me crazy stuff, that he had had Ferraris and all kinds of cars parked in his driveway before, in America, when Priest broke through, before he even knew how to drive! So he was like, 'I had all this kind of shit, and it's

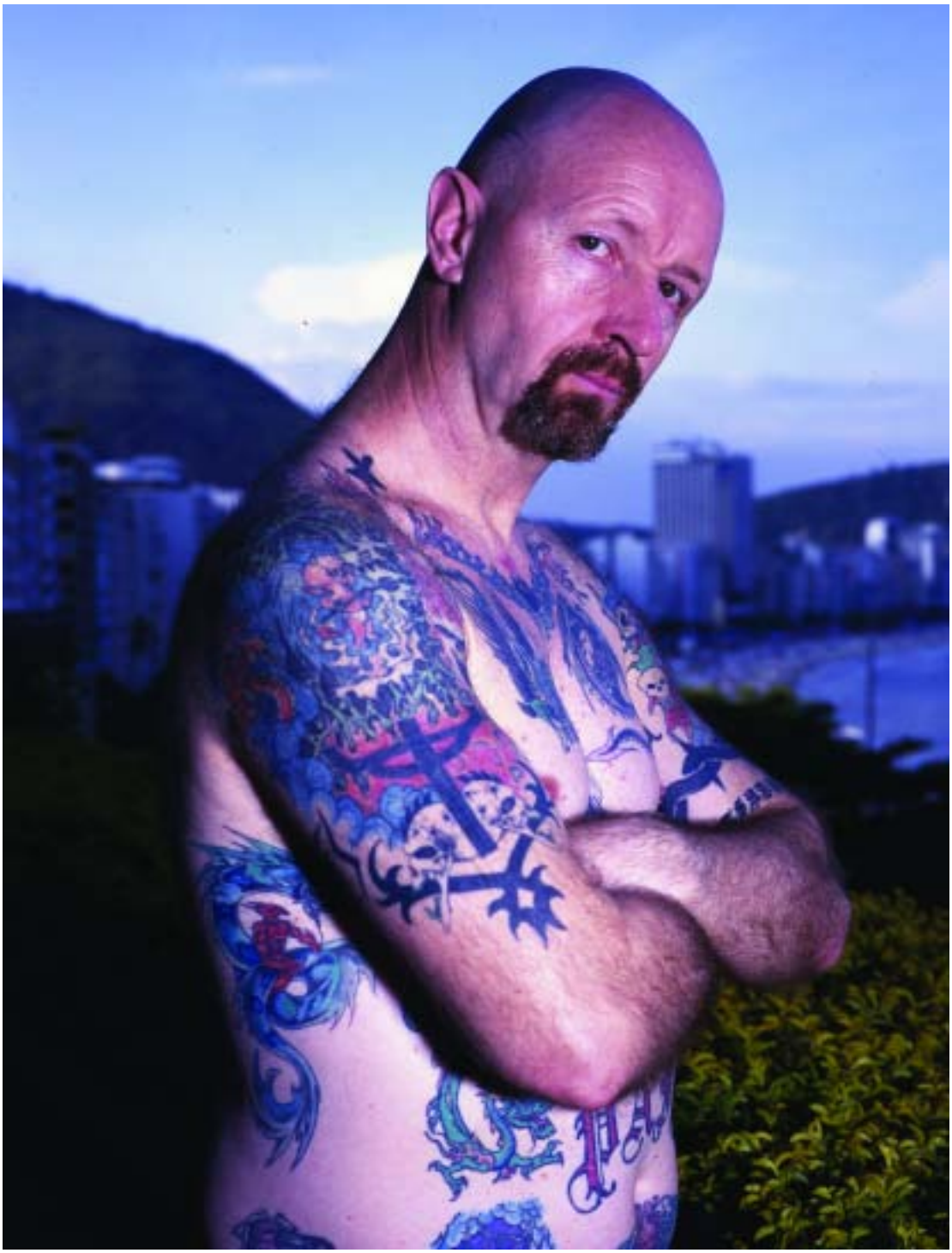
not important to me anymore.' And I think the fan stuff is stored away. All the stuff is definitely taken in and saved. I must say that Rob is a very private person as well, and he likes to keep it that way. When you see that many people, I think personal time is that much more sacred."

Mike relates a few amusing tidbits from those jaw sessions with Rob. "He told me hilarious stories from the beginning. K.K. used to wear this big white hat, because he was very Jimi Hendrix–influenced. And in the early days of Priest, they didn't have a lot of money for effects. So they hired this guy who would burn stuff on the side of the stage and fan the stuff into the stage, to make smoke. Well, the guy was like the biggest drug addict in the world, so he would burn all this hashish and pot. So all those guys were stoned onstage constantly, and one time the whole thing went on fire, so he took K.K.'s white hat to try put it out, and the thing burned. K.K. was pretty upset. Also, because they didn't have any money, their manager used to rig up the elevator because they couldn't pay for telephone calls, and he would ride up and down the elevator, using this free telephone in there, booking gigs for the band. Those guys were jokers back then. They used to do all kinds of stuff."

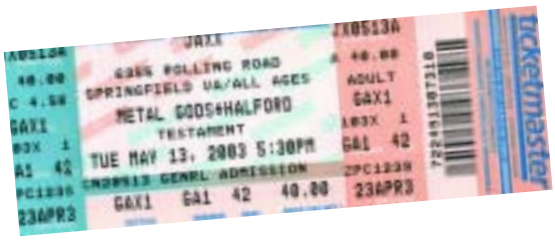
Talk turns to Roy Z, and his effect on the two Halford albums. "I think the rule was for him to come in and help us make a great record, and help steer the band in the right direction. Especially in the beginning, because you had people from all over the United States that had never played together before. And they have to make a record. All we had was the raw talent of wanting to make the best record we could. Roy had an incredibly hard job, probably like many producers out there . . . And at the same time, Roy was the type of guy who wants to make a great record. There are only so many calls you can take from the label or anybody else before you're like, 'You know, this is not about that; this is about the music.'"

And just as *Crucible* seemed to have this grey cloud hanging over its head, so did subsequent touring dates for the band. *Crucible* proper tour dates went according to plan, but later on, a touring package dubbed Metal Gods started with much fanfare, only to be knocked on its head due to poor ticket sales, or more accurately, ticket numbers that couldn't support that much gear and personnel on the road. It was a noble attempt at a sort of smaller-venue Ozzfest, this idea that a bunch of cutting edge metal acts could be put together with a legendary personality as anchor store at the metal mall, and then the whole combative, tight little ball thrust into larger clubs to duke it out for modern metal supremacy.

It was a pretty cool bill. Testament would have served as bridge to the anchor that was Halford, with the likes of Immortal, Amon Amarth, Carnal Forge and Dark Tranquillity serving as black- and death-metal boutiques along the way. Metal Mike — like Zakk and Black Label Society at an Ozzfest — would pull double rock 'n' roll duty, bringing Painmuseum to the undercard as a bit of tough thrash backwash. Adding irony was the job of



Mick Huston/Redferns



Primal Fear, providing many moments more Priest-like than Halford did covering a classic.

Explained Rob in April of '03, as the tour was wobbling toward life, "With respect to the lineup, some of it is going to be a bit flexible. They'll be people joining in and some people will be moving on. It's basically going to be six, seven acts at a go. The selection of bands has basically been a discussion between myself and management, John Baxter and Thomas up at Universal in New York. Obviously there's an enormous amount of great metal talent out there, and a lot of these people that we're working with are friends of mine. And that's not to say that friends are getting the best bet. What we've tried to do is put together a bill that's probably about as broad and diverse in metal as you can possibly get. We wanted to show the diversity. When you look at Halford, you'll see something different than when you look at Immortal or Primal Fear. That's why we called it Metal Gods. It's just a wave displaying the broadness of metal. It's an unusual way of doing it, versus just being fine-tuned on one style and sound. Each of these bands has done such tremendous work over the years and they're all leaders in their own genre of metal. So it makes even more sense to bring them into that heading of Metal Gods 2003."

"To be honest, I only met Rob, like, twice during the tour, because the tour got canceled," lamented Johan Hegg of Amon Amarth, recalling his brief brush with the Metal God. "But he seemed like a very nice guy, a bit . . . he didn't really go out there very much, but he was cool. The thing was, we did a tour for the agency — Universal Agency, I think they're called — and we did a tour with Deicide in the States. The agent told us that Rob Halford's management had asked about us. I will let that be, you know. I'm not going to say that it was that way, but that's what he explained to us. If that's true, that's a brilliant, brilliant thing. Because if the management asks about us, then it's probably Rob Halford who asked about us. I think it's a really cool thing. And I've heard from people saying that Rob really does have a good eye on the metal scene in general. So it wouldn't surprise me if it was that way. It was really cool to be able to go on that tour. It's just sad that it was badly managed from the agency side. It would have been a great, great tour."

"We'll just basically tear it all apart and rebuild it," projected Halford on changes to come in the set list versus the *Crucible* dates already covered. "And as much as we are always trying to, it's a case of trying to cover as much of my 30-plus years in metal and trying to give everybody a little bit of a ride through the great career that I've had. Obviously 'Resurrection' and 'Made in Hell' have become sort of rallying calls, so those will probably go in the list. The title track from *Crucible* obviously. We're having great reaction to tracks like 'Heretic'

and 'Heart of Darkness.' It's going to be difficult, because as much as we like the songs and we've been playing them out, there's always that great quest, that great challenge of looking for other ideas as well. The fact is, we're going to be the last band on in each of these Metal Gods events, so we just want to go out there and just tear it up and put together a really exciting, versatile set list of great metal."

Another wrinkle in the leather was that Pat Lachman was out as guitarist, replaced by Roy Z. "Yes, and it's quite a simple moment," explains Rob. "In any new band, you're all hustling and jostling for position, and you're all going through different experiences musically and emotionally. Pat had a great time with us on those first two releases, but on the conclusion of the trip last summer in Europe, he was feeling unsettled and he wanted to stretch into a different area, which of course he's done, because now he's moved into the vocal world and he's no longer playing guitar. You know, I wish him well. He's an incredibly talented guy and I look forward to hearing what he's coming up with next. Roy was terrific. Obviously with Pat's departure, he left us in kind of a confused state because Pat is a solid player in the band. And Roy just stepped up and showed great support and dedication to the band. First of all, he's a great talent in producing these two releases so well and contributing musically. So it just seemed like a natural thing to have happen when Roy came forward and offered his work for these live performances. And now it turns out that he's just having so much fun he's obviously on board for the Metal Gods 2003 tour."

"We're all inspiring each other," says Rob, getting back to the bands at hand. "That's what we do; we feed off each other's talents and we feed off each other's energy and power. And that's pretty much been the creative source for a lot of artistic endeavors. You look around and you see things and you hear things, and it just gets you motivated and it gets you fired up. When I stand on the side of the stage and watch these bands performing as we go along, it will create the buzz that makes me want to go out and do what I do as well as I can at that moment. And I think that's just inherent in what we do as musicians, and what it does for the audience as well. So many musicians will tell you, I saw you perform at this venue or at that venue and you were the person that gave me the impetus to want to pick up a guitar or mic or just get involved in this great world of metal."

DEMOLITION

(Steamhammer/SPV, July '01)

Machine Man
One on One
Hell Is Home
Jekyll and Hyde
Close to You
Devil Digger
Bloodsuckers
In Between
Feed on Me
Subterfuge
Lost and Found
Cyberface
Metal Messiah

22

"FIVE YEARS FIGHTING OUR WAY BACK UP"

– Demolition

With Rob buzzing in headbanged eardrums with his gleaming Halford band, Priest was still having its own troubles trying to convince its fans that the band was viable without the Metal God. Entrenching, as Maiden did with its own whipping boy, Blaze Bayley, Judas Priest came up with a second album for its own controversial configuration.

Pre-production, Ripper positioned the upcoming album as a little more about real life issues, adding that "the good thing about Priest is that every album is different. And now I'm going to be writing with them, I think we'll try to get an even wider audience, you know? Hopefully it will be as heavy, but I think there will be some different vocal styles, maybe a commercial tint to it, maybe some new melodies, although you know, the reason why I enjoyed *Jugulator* is that there were almost like hidden melodies. People would listen to the songs and not even realize they were there. But when you listen to them again, people go 'Wow.' Like with 'Brain Dead,' there are actually melodies there."

Demolition was issued on July 31, 2001, and a quick listen confirmed Ripper's predictions. Although quite similar to *Jugulator* in its jackhammering riffing, there were indeed peaks, valleys and respites amid the mayhem. Of note was the fact that Priest had moved back up a notch on the record label food chain. Negotiations were kept quiet, with the band even having to skip Ozzfest '99 partially because of the deal. In any event, *Demolition* would emerge on Atlantic in North America, with the band retaining their ties with SPV over in Europe.

"There's more light and shade on this CD," said Owens, summing up what was still, in effect, a pretty pulverizing album. "The thing is, we have 13 tracks on the new record, so that gives us extra songs to go in a different direction. There's a lot of similarities to *Jugulator* on songs like 'One on One' and 'Machine Man.' But it goes into a whole different area, more melody, even a couple ballads. It's just a great CD, I think."

Yet Ripper was still not part of the writing team, something that seemed likely in the long lead-up to the album. "No, not on this one. Obviously, the CD was written for my vocals, and I do have a lot of say in the studio. But K.K. and Glenn have been the main writers and I'm not just going to jump right in. I'm willing to stay that way for a little while. There is a bonus track on the Japanese copy with a song that I had written with them called 'What's My Name,' and we've written since then. But it's been an odd few years, signing new record deals, and it's hard to get together when you live 3,000, 4,000 miles apart. It's hard to get together when you don't know each other's writing styles as much and we haven't written together."

"They've always gone with new technology," begins Owens, asked about the interesting buzzing guitar sound used sporadically on the album. "Judas Priest has always forged forward technically. They never looked at the past or stayed in the past, and they've never been afraid to move forward. In '82 when *Screaming for Vengeance* came out, it was state of the art for that time. And now there are so many different things you can do and they use them all. Ken likes guitar solos that have a computeristic-type sound at times — he likes effects. The thing is, you can play guitar now, and then go to this rack and have 5000 different effects to choose from. And you never have a plan when you're going in with something. It just kind of works out through the writing and recording process. They did a lot more splitting up of the solos this time. On *Jugulator* there was a lot more dueling guitar solos. You can really tell the difference between their playing. Ken's got a real original style, a lot of the wammy bar, a lot of odd guitar sounds

during the solos. Glenn's patterns are pretty straightforward; it's fairly bluesy guitar playing."

"I was able to show the vocal range that I have," continues Ripper. "You know, I happen to love *Jugulator* myself, but this one just has more melody, utilizing a whole different area of my voice that people haven't heard. And Glenn knew how to get that out of me and show people that. Lyrically, obviously there is the classic Priest-type stuff, like tongue-in-cheek things you don't take too seriously. People always try to diagnose the lyrics and get into them way too deep. Some of them are just meant to laugh at, not be too serious. But there are also some serious issues. 'Bloodsuckers' is about the court case in America, and songs like 'Close to You' are about losing a loved one. 'Hell Is Home' and 'In Between' tackle everyday life situations. There are a lot of lyrics that a lot of kids will understand."

"Feed on Me" is a particularly strong track, the band creating a synthesis of a lockstep riff with a melodic chorus. As well, Ripper sounds like Ronnie James Dio. "I've heard that," says Ripper, "but I didn't know that at the time. As a song, actually I think it's Scott's favorite also. The first time I put lead vocals to it, I recorded it differently, in a lower register, which you can hear in the background on the second verse. And I said I didn't quite like that version of it and I just went back and belted it out.

"We did a lot of stuff like that with the vocals, doubling and tripling. The more people listen to it, the more they're going to hear stuff in the record. That's the great thing about the CD. At the end of 'Close to You,' there's a giant harmony in the background that you really have to listen to that sounds like an organ, but it's me. These are just things to put in the background, weird voices. We went into it wanting to use a lot of effects. And Glenn said, 'Your voice is so odd sometimes, I didn't want to use any effects, because it's such a strange sound.' It's actually a pretty sad song. It will probably touch a lot of people, especially people who have just lost a loved one. Once again, it's a classic-style Priest song."

Mark Gromen

Indeed "Close to You" is another welcome departure from all the hard and humorless heaviness. It's a dark ballad but at a mid-paced clip. Ripper turns in a passion-filled vocal, and throughout, the studio touches are nicely massaged into this novel track, as is the hugely melodic and well-composed guitar solo.

Ripper calls "Metal Messiah" "the classic metal god song of the year 2001. I think it's a step forward. It's heavy metal moved to the future — no doubt about it. It's got a modern-sounding verse with the classic heavy metal hard rock chorus. But I think it's just got new technology stuff in it that a lot of people haven't done in metal before." Adds Glenn, "It's probably the strangest song on the album, because it

Mark Gromen

was written in conjunction with Chris Tsangarides, who is a great guy and actually the only other person we would write with; he's a bit like us. But it's a modern song, a brave song."

"Chris helped set up the initial recording sessions in Silvermere where we started recording," notes Ian, "and he had a couple of ideas, and he played us this tape one day and really what you hear there and what it started out as [laughs] . . . there's no resemblance. But we thought yeah, it's got a real good vibe, a real good feel, and we liked that *Lawrence of Arabia* phrasing. It sort of rolls along there and Glenn thought he could work with it. It's just experimentation; it's what we do. We've always embraced new technologies. We try new devices and bits and pieces and whatever sounds good, we'll use it. Or whatever we think sounds good, I should say [laughs]." Of note, Tsangarides cowrites on "Subterfuge" as well, and in fact had been asked to coproduce the album with Glenn, but couldn't make it because not only did he have a full work schedule, but his wife was pregnant. Ergo, Tipton gets sole credit, K.K. joking that he wasn't included because he "got lazy."

"Metal Messiah" is definitely a trippy one, with a clouds-clearing chorus that is one of the best on the album. Still, there's that near-rap vocal, which caused some consternation among the faithful. "But it's not what we call that, because, you know, what we did is we took two tracks and two different characters on the tracks. So it was like one track was the first line, and the second line was on another track, so we were just shooting it out of different tracks. It wasn't like straightforward speaking. It is something we tried to do and make different, and not have it sound so smooth. It makes it a little more inventive."

"Lost and Found" provides further dimension, this one being an acoustic ballad nicely appointed and characterized convincingly by Ripper — the near-Celtic chorus melodies provide another intelligent touch. "It's one of my favorites," says Ripper (mirroring the opinion of Ian Hill), also noting that it was the second song he tracked for the album. "Hopefully we'll get it out there as a single and maybe get some radio play. It's just a great, classic-type Priest song. It goes back to the 'Last Rose of Summer' and 'Before the Dawn' days, those songs they used to do like that back in the '70s. They kind of went back to their roots."

Of "Cyberface" (recall one of the bigger Halford songs is called "Cyberworld"), Ripper reveals that "originally Scott had come to the studio one time a couple years back, and he had some lyrics and he gave them to Glenn. Glenn is into computers and so is Scott, and they just kind of went with it. They tried to make it sound different, but that song is really Priest-ish too. You know, the only idea we had after *Jugulator* . . . when we did the live record, we listened to 'Diamonds and Rust' and we said we would like to throw in a bit more melody for the next record. That's all we thought — it

had to move forward past *Jugulator*, which was a modern-sounding record. It had to move forward past there. I think this album does have elements of classic Judas Priest, but people have to realize this is 2001, and this is a whole different version of Judas Priest. This is about as close to the old stuff as were going to sound. And you know, I think we tune differently for every song. It's one of those where you're going to have to go get your set list ready for the live show. I think it's probably D, and probably a few C's — it's all different."

Opener "Machine Man" is perhaps a little more fatiguing, like any number of *Jugulator* tracks. "That's in the classic vein of Priest songs like 'Exciter' or 'Freewheel Burning' or 'Painkiller.' It's about a motorcycle race to the death and the Machine Man always wins. So it's a motorcycle song. It's funny, a 650 Bonneville is an old motorcycle which, you know, I've never heard of it. I thought I was singing about a car and I asked Glenn about it, and no, it's a motorcycle."

"Hell Is Home" is another cool *Demolition* track, this one being slow and quite dark, but tempered with interesting vocal melodies. "It's really about finding your own level," says Glenn of the lyric. "If you try and get one too high, you'll be a nobody, but come down a little bit and you can be somebody. You're nobody up there, but you're a big hero down here. So the word 'hell' in that sense has not been used like pitchforks and all that business."

Tipton pretty much mirrors Ripper's positioning of *Demolition* versus *Jugulator*, although stressing that he wanted to make it "earthy and gritty," while still experimenting with modern guitar textures — as long as what is done can be reproduced live. Says Glenn, "If you look at all the albums — *Painkiller*, *Point of Entry*, *Turbo*, *British Steel* — there's always a

contrast. It's unmistakably Judas Priest and they are all viable reflections of how we currently feel. I think this album has more classic tones to it. *Jugulator* was a very fierce, very angry album and that's the way we felt. Nobody ever quite knows what to expect from our next album. And we never take the safe route; we take a brave route.

"It's more naturally played, this album. We put mics in front of cabinets and just got a nice, gritty, down-to-earth background sound and then layered stuff on top of that. And I think Tim found his feet more on this album as well; he found a lot of character in his voice. When we did *Jugulator*, everybody just wanted a Judas Priest album, and now we can give them a Judas Priest album with more depth. It's inevitable that we evolve from one album to the next. It's been a natural thing with the band, forever really. But again, we don't sit down and think, 'Where are we going with this album?' We just sit down and write it and it's a natural reflection on how we currently feel at

IF YOU EXPECT A NEW JUDAS PRIEST ALBUM YOU EXPECT A CERTAIN THING. WHY, I DON'T KNOW, BECAUSE EVERY ONE OF OUR ALBUMS HAS BEEN DIFFERENT!

this position in time. The next album could be very diverse. It could be an acoustic album, not acoustic, but you know, it could go the other way. It could be really fierce. We don't really know what we're going to do until we sit down and write it. I think one of the strengths of the band is the way the two guitars match up. Because we do have different styles and techniques, and they blend together to form the Priest sound. But we're no more important than Ian. Ian's got his own style of playing. Scott has his, and obviously the vocals, and they all go together to produce the Priest sound. And again, it's something we really don't have to work with; it's a natural thing."

Explaining the time span between albums, Glenn points out that "people forget that when *Jugulator* came out, we toured that for a long time, about a year. And then we needed a break. But I think we all reached a point in our lives — I know I had — where my private and personal life had to take priority. . . . We've always put Priest first, regardless. We're all getting on a bit and I think we've all reached the point where a lot of us have children. So yes, I had to put my family first, and that took a lot of time. The actual writing took the longest time. All these things went on; people think we've been away for four years doing nothing, but in actual fact, a lot of water went under the bridge." Specifically, Glenn's father had come down with serious health problems and has since died. On the work front, Tipton had been building a recording studio in his barn.

"With *Jugulator*, people said it's too extreme and we had some quite bad reviews on it, and then suddenly, the people who reviewed it came back and said, 'You know what? I'm really sorry. I've really gotten into the album.' We always get that because we don't always give people what they expect from us. We never have. If you expect a new Judas Priest album you expect a certain thing. Why, I don't know, because every one of our albums has been different! And that's the intrigue with the band."

Ian Hill looks to the quieter bits as *Demolition*'s trump. "The main difference is the inclusion of the lighter sides of Judas Priest, the more subtle passages that we became known for in the past, which was missing to a large extent on *Jugulator*. *Jugulator* . . . was a very aggressive, brutal album. I think we needed to do that to let everybody know that we were back with a bang. But one thing that was missing was the subtler side of things, which we rectified on *Demolition*."

"In times gone by it was very simplistic," says Ian, about his bass work on the album. "It was just thumping along — just Dave Holland and myself. To waver from that wouldn't really have added to the song as a whole. You would actually be taking some of the power away from it if you were to start throwing licks in there and stuff like that. With *Demolition*, I am playing melodies on the bass and there is a lot more scope for me, which is great fun to do. I am sticking licks in there and that is something that I haven't done since the very early days."

"Recording with Judas Priest always takes forever and a day," adds Hill, "which is how it has always been, since *Turbo* really. In the earlier days, you had a deadline. You had some studio time and that was it. If you didn't finish it, you ended up rushing it. But as you get more affluent as it goes, time doesn't really come into it. So we pay a hell of a lot of attention to detail, try to iron out every little problem, every little mistake or glitch, all the tiny little things that really piss you off every time you hear them. It's the worst thing in the world when something goes out there on the shelf and you know there's something on there you could have done better. Now you've got to live with it for the rest of your life. So that attention to detail does take a long time. Glenn did a lot of work on the production. There's a lot of production on there, all of which takes time. Even in the studio, the songs take on new character. You go in there thinking you're going to play something, and you come out playing something completely different, and it's time-consuming. It's not as if we were taking it easy. The album was getting worked on for about 12 months."

Given the snail's pace of the *Demolition* job, rumors flew in at least a couple of directions. Pointing to cozy quotes from Halford about the guys, the Internet was abuzz that a reunion with Rob must be in the cards. As well, Ripper had used some of his downtime to catch a few shows, Pantera being a particular favorite. With Ripper being younger than the Priest guys, with one very heavy Priest record under his belt (surely Ripper's doing!), and with Phil Anselmo feuding with Vinnie and Dimebag and off working with various sideprojects, the natural indication was to assume Ripper would be the new singer for Pantera. None of that, of course, transpired, although after Priest did get back together with Rob, Ripper had himself a good gig in hand with Iced Earth. Also as the album was simmering, Rob was in Cleveland doing a radio interview, and Ripper was publicly called down for a hello, resulting in a cordial meeting between the Metal God and his disciple.

IN AUSTRALIA FOR THE FIRST TIME!
Judas Priest
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
FRI 30 NOV METRO CITY, PERTH
SUN 2 DEC THEBARTON THEATRE, ADELAIDE
MON 3 DEC THE PALACE, MELBOURNE
WED 5 DEC ENMORE THEATRE, SYDNEY
FRI 7 DEC ARENA, BRISBANE
'DEMOLITION' TOUR EDITION DOUBLE CD OUT NOV 26 THRU WARNERS
outsider
www.judaspriest.com
www.coppel.com.au

Still, rumors persisted of Rob's imminent return to the fold, which seemed to increasingly rankle Owens, who somewhat fanned the flames by repeatedly pointing out that Halford's career wasn't going so hot, so of course, Rob wanted back in.

"There will always be rumors," said Glenn for the millionth time during those days of turmoil. "Forevermore, to our dying day. This is our third album with Ripper. We've just spent five years fighting our way back up. I don't

even think about reunions. And if you come and watch the band, he's the best singer around in the world. That's what I think. And he's a nice guy. He does have bad wind, but we can put up with it [laughs]. Just kidding. There'll always be rumors."

Mark Gromen

All told, *Demolition* had a little more humanity than *Jugulator*, but fully charming it was not. And as Glenn says, it's more expansive and ambitious in terms of arrangements, production tones, layers, tips 'n' tricks. There's a strong connection to mechanistic, Pantera-esque modern metal to be sure — some grumbled and called it nu-metal — but the guys try some interesting things, and succeed in the doing thereof, resulting in a mature record worthy of continued exploration.

"I'm going to be dead honest with you right now," says Scott Travis, struggling to differentiate between the two albums, granted, five years down the line. "I couldn't tell you which songs are on which album. My point is, it's going to be hard for me to answer that, because I don't recall any of the songs. From my standpoint . . . they were both recorded at the same studio in England, obviously at different times, I guess about a year and a half or two years apart. They were recorded with the same engineer, the same studio, the same general setting and surrounding, and recorded in the same way. And so for me, it's really hard to differentiate between them. I can picture myself in the studio on a given day, or when something happened or something broke down, and I couldn't tell you which record it was. The main reason I have this feeling is that because we literally did them using the same formula — the only time I've done that with Priest or Racer X or anybody. I mean, every Priest record we've done was in a different location, different engineer, different setting."

A year after the fact, Ripper reflected on the press and fan reaction to the album. "You can look at some magazines like *Rolling Stone*, where we got a great review, and you look at other ones and we didn't. I think the problem with *Demolition* is that people put it on at one time and listened to it, and reviewed it or put it on at one time and didn't listen to it. Some people said there wasn't any melody in the CD, but I just don't get it. I mean there are two slow songs — that's melody. I think a lot of people jumped the gun on it. I don't think the records ever get good reviews when they first come out. I go back in time and read old reviews on *Painkiller* and it had a lot of bad reviews, and nowadays that album is looked upon as one of their best records. It's always like that because Judas Priest changes every record, and I think the big thing about *Demolition* was that you had to keep listening to it because there was a lot there. There were a lot of vocals there, there was a lot of music there, and I think it just took a lot of listens, or a few and it got better. The album grows on you. There might be a few too many songs on it. People said there was too much music, and I thought it was pretty cool to give people lots of music. Let's just give 'em eight songs for three minutes apiece next time just like they used to in the day, and then we'll be in trouble because it's all too short. You can't win."

Being on a major label — and making a better record — didn't help Judas Priest sell more records. *Demolition* topped out at a lowly #165 on the Billboard charts, selling 52,000 copies over the course of four years, half the number notched by *Jugulator*. The launching of "Lost and Found" as a single and video seemed half-hearted from the start, and marketing for the record was thin on the ground. It didn't help that *Demolition*'s album cover came across as slapdash, Priest using to an even

greater extent the same kiddie-corner blood-red that was present on all the Ripper-era product thus far.

"Of course you have to get people to buy your records nowadays and not burn them," commented Ripper on the low record sales. "It's affecting music, there's not a question about it — when you could sell 20,000 or 30,000 more copies, that affects you. I mean I tell people all the time, if somebody burns my CD and has me sign it, you know, I'm not an ass, I'm gonna sign it. But I just say, 'Do you work for free?' I mean, when computers take over everybody's job at the local bread factory or wherever they're working at and they don't need them, don't come crying to me. You should be able to burn a song or two off a CD, but you shouldn't be able to burn the whole CD. But I think we gotta worry more about war right now than burning CDs."

Judas Priest also saw a pretty swell reissue program out of Columbia in 2001 (actually in three phases, with the third dipping into 2002), each of the albums originally issued for the label (*Sin After Sin* through *Painkiller*) relaunched with puzzle-like spine graphics that, combined, map out the Priest cross on fire.

"Some albums needed a lot of work to bring them up to the same quality as say, *British Steel*," noted Glenn at the time. "*British Steel* didn't need a lot of work, but going back to *Stained Class* and albums like that, they're a little bit thin on the bottom end and we beefed them up. And the guy who did the remastering, John Astley, he's great — he did the Led Zeppelins — and of course we dug up all these unheard tracks, which are bona fide bonus tracks instead of retakes of songs that have already been released. And that, combined with the extra photos and information and the package themselves, I just think it's a wonderful package. We would never do anything half measure. I think some of these remaster things are bit of a con and they shortchange the fans. We are so proud of our fans and our back catalog that I think this is a must for every Priest fan and metal fan. It's a real part of history."

Adds Ian, "Listening to some of the older albums as well, you've got to realize that they are over 20 years old and the technology then, obviously, was primitive compared to today's standards. So to get those albums sounding somewhat modern, with modern technology, there is a considerable difference in the available quality."

Essentially, each album came with one new non-LP studio track and a live track — not exactly an embarrassment of riches given how extensive reissues can be these days. What's more, little care was taken with respect to pairing up either the originals or the live tracks with the era from which the original album sprung. A live version of 1984's "Jawbreaker" tacked to the end of 1977's *Sin After Sin* is corporate stupidity in action, and this happens all over the place here, although the two live albums get additional live tracks logically appropriate to the situation. And it's a bit dismaying that the studio tracks — even if they are in the wrong places — are only vaguely explained within the scant, puffed-up, cliché-ridden liner notes. Still, the sound is improved, lyrics are included, and the spine puzzle is a nice touch, even if tiny glitches in the execution

abound. The set was also purchasable all at once as *The Re-Masters*, with a spiffy box to hold strong the metal enclosed. Even this was slightly botched by Sony/Legacy, with the U.S. box stickered as a U.K. one, and only 1000 copies ordered up for America — matching the U.K. quantity — which quickly sold out.

In addition to live tracks being placed carelessly throughout, some of them are even credited with wrong dates. No need to run down the facts surrounding these, but a recap of the studio rarities is in order. *Sin After Sin* includes the band's cover of Gun's "Race with the Devil," actually recorded in Birmingham, during the *Stained Class* sessions. *Stained Class*, on the other hand, includes "Fire Burns Below" from the *Ram it Down* sessions nine years later, in Denmark. *Hell Bent for Leather* adds "Fight for Your Life," the "Rock Hard Ride Free" prototype from the *Defenders of the Faith* sessions five years hence. *British Steel* goes with "Red, White & Blue" from the *Turbo* sessions in sunny Nassau. *Point of Entry* adds "Thunder Road" from the *Ram it Down* sessions, while *Screaming for Vengeance* goes with "Prisoner of Your Eyes" from the *Turbo* sessions. *Defenders* also gets a *Turbo* session track in "Turn on Your Light," and *Turbo* aptly gets a *Turbo* session track in "All Fired Up." *Painkiller* receives a track from its own session as well, with "Living Bad Dreams," which would have been that album's quietest song had it lived to tell the tale back in 1990.

It is interesting that no real gems fall out of that lot, with the general trend being toward a commerciality that is almost AOR or hair metal at times, unsurprising in that almost all of these rarities originate from the mid-'80s when, much to K.K.'s chagrin, all these bloody new bands were suddenly outselling the masters.

To add even more buzz and chatter to the Priest saga at this point, a Hollywood movie was in the works. Called *Rock Star*, and eventually starring Mark Wahlberg and Jennifer Aniston, the movie was supposed to be the story of Ripper's rise from a Priest cover band into the ranks of the band covered.

Mused Ian, "I really don't know how this happened. Originally, they had their rights. There was that article in the *New York Times* about how Ripper got discovered and he ended up playing with his idols, and all the rest of it. Well, they bought the rights to that story and then there were a few rumors in the business that they were going to do this, and suddenly we were seeing on the Internet that there was going to be this movie, the story of Ripper Owens. And we thought, wait a minute, if that's the case we better get in touch with these people and ask them if they want any help. I mean, hearing things through the horse's mouth, might be worth listening. And after that, of course, things changed and they didn't want us involved in it and obviously, it's their story, their movie. But from what I've heard, people are saying it's not really the same story. It's a generic band now with generic members and the characters don't really equate to what we are. So it's something we're bracing for. Because obviously, people are going to think it's the story of Judas Priest."

As it turned out, as Ian says, Hollywood didn't want Priest meddling, and Priest, having gotten a look at the script, was up in arms over the liberties taken with the story. Each went about their business, the movie indeed ending up having little to do with the actual tale of Ripper's rise. Despite huge buzz in the metal community, like most rock 'n' roll movies, *Rock Star* died a death on its quick way to video, yet another thin, simplistic and predictable tale loaded up with heavy metal clichés.

LIVE IN LONDON

(Steamhammer/SPV, January '03)

Disc 1

Metal Gods
Heading out to the Highway
Grinder
Touch of Evil
Blood Stained
Victim of Changes
The Sentinel
One on One
Running Wild
The Ripper
Diamonds and Rust
Feed on Me
The Green Manalishi
(with the Two-Pronged Crown)

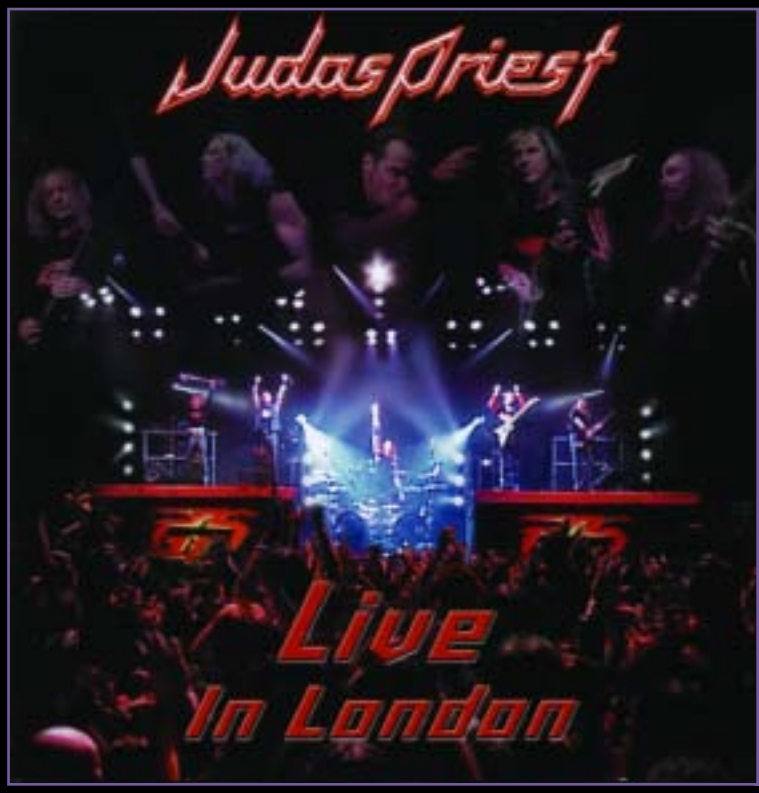
Disc 2

Beyond the Realms of Death
Burn in Hell
Hell Is Home
Breaking the Law
Desert Plains
You've Got Another Thing Comin'
Turbo Lover
Painkiller
The Hellion
Electric Eye
United
Living After Midnight
Hell Bent for Leather

23

"OK, I CAN LIVE WITH THIS"

– Live in London



One-upping Halford, who pulled from his leather chaps a double live album after one studio album, Priest was about to unleash a second double live album amid two studio albums. Combined, that's six discs of live material (and at the root of all of it, a mega-metal supply of Halford-era Priest classics) against three rounders of new music.

Dion DeTora

In any event, there it was on the racks, on April 8, 2003, *Live in London*, housed in a metallic cardboard over-sleeve, embossed, but otherwise simply stated. The album was the product of the *Demolition* tour, which saw Ripper trot out a shiny chrome coat which fans set about calling the baked potato jacket. Ripper himself joked that the blinding coat of steel has ties to Roswell, that it accelerates plant growth, and that by the end of the set, Glenn is sporting a nice golden tan.

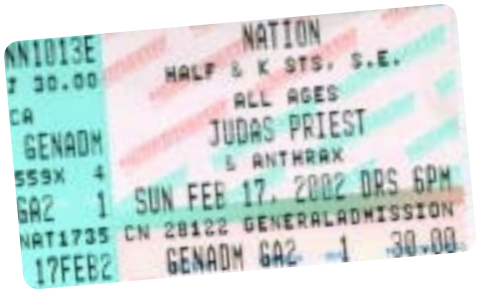
Europe was first to hear Priest in *Demolition* mode, the tour commencing on June 8, 2001, in Switzerland, and ending in Spain a month and a couple of dozen dates later. After taking August off, the band went to South America, logging five dates that wound their way up to Mexico on September 10, 2001.

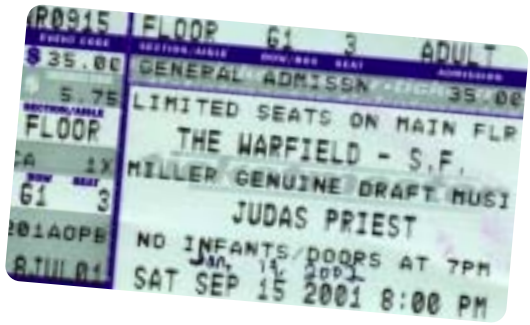
The terrorist attacks of September 11th postponed the U.S. portion of the tour, which was supposed to feature Anthrax and Iced Earth as support. In fact, the band found itself stranded in Mexico for four or five days, and their equipment impounded. The fact that they had no equipment, that their record was called *Demolition*, and that one of the backup bands was called Anthrax all combined to cause a cessation of touring activities.

Halloween found the band back in Europe for 14 dates, before three dates in Australia and four dates in Japan through December of '01. Four days after playing the last Japanese date on December 15th, Priest found themselves at the Brixton Academy in London recording the CD and DVD that was to be *Live in London*. There may have, in fact, been plans to issue only a DVD, but, says Priest management, SPV (of note, Atlantic is now out of the picture), requested that a CD version of the event also be issued, the CD emerging with six more tracks than the DVD.

Two tracks from *Jugulator* ("Blood Stained" and "Burn in Hell") and three tracks from *Demolition* ("One on One," "Feed on Me" and "Hell Is Home") would make the 25-track live CD, although on the tour, "Bloodsuckers" and "Machine Man" also surfaced in the set list. The *Live in London* album found the band super-charged and massive of attack. Ripper is in fine form, and a number of cool track inclusions from the Halford era that weren't around for *'98 Live Meltdown* made the grade, namely "Desert Plains," "Turbo Lover," "United," "Heading out to the Highway" and "Running Wild."

Ripper claims the album is pretty bare bones in terms of touch-ups, and certainly on the vocal end, he wasn't involved in any fixes whatsoever. "I would have probably fixed some bad notes that I had, but you know, I like that. I like that element because it's a good element to have. What you hear is what you get. I know I could sing better than that, but I sure could sing a lot worse than that too. It's just a good live record and I think as a fan you want it. People say 'Oh he's doing that again.' Well, then you know, don't buy the damn thing. You'd be the first person to buy a bootleg for two dollars off the Internet that sounds like shit, but yet you're not gonna spend 14, 15 dollars on a





Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

double live CD with 25 songs. I think it's a good package, nice cover; it's got nice stuff in it. It's different than the DVD, which has plenty of backstage stuff that Priest never did. It's got soundcheck and the CD has extra tracks and everything in between."

With regard to the soundcheck footage, Ripper says it's useful simply from an instructional point of view. "Obviously we added more songs in there for soundcheck because we usually don't do five songs or whatever. I screwed up 'Machine Man' and that's on there, and I wanted to do it again, but we were out of time. And I was saying, 'Gee, if Glenn screwed it up, we'd do it again!'

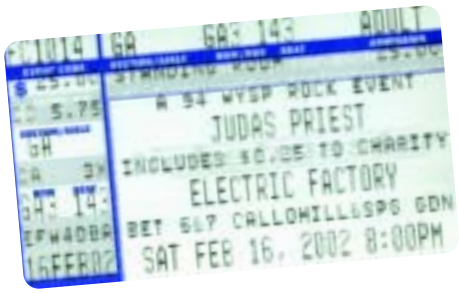
"It is a good song selection. There are songs I wish were on there that we played on the last tour like 'Bloodsuckers' and 'Exciter' and 'Devil's Child,' but every tour has to change. Unfortunately you always miss some when you put 25 songs on a record. I thought 'Exciter' last tour was a really good one and 'Bloodsucker' was a great opener. It always went over good; it surprised people. But this live CD is really good. I say just get 'em — they're both different. The DVD is surround sound, has a great sound, and the CD is in stereo and has just a wonderful sound. That's the main thing — they're just two great packages. I think the DVD is quite funny myself."

"You would like it if you're a fan because it's something of a coming out period," continues Owens, contrasting the two live albums. "This record, I'm way more comfortable in the band because I've been in it now. There's a sense of humor element between some songs, and my singing is much better. I think maybe it's because I sing it like I want to sing it, and it's easier for me. I learned from *Meltdown* what to do and what not to do, and I learn every day.

Dion DeTora

Overall it's more entertaining than *Meltdown*, and it's also way rawer.

"Seven years later and I still get a kick when we go on the road. Glenn and I will get up and hit the golf course or go to the gym together. Ken and I will go to the gym together. We all go out to eat together all the time. I still get excitement out of it. I get excited when I see stuff in magazines or newspapers. I still get a kick out of it, yeah, it's definitely quite amazing. Of course, right from the start they were the nicest guys in the world and that was the odd thing that we had. We kind of bonded when we first met each other for this strange type of a reason, and I think that's really also what helped me get the gig. It was my voice on that videotape, but I was a normal guy and they went 'Hey, this guy's normal' which they liked, because they're definitely down-to-earth, normal guys."



I HAD ONE GUY FLIP ME OFF AND BY HALFWAY THROUGH THE CONCERT I HAD HIM SINGING WITH ME, SO THAT WAS REALLY COOL.

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

Dion DeTora

"The crowd response is phenomenal," continues Ripper, on how things went down on the tour. "I mean, you work the show and you see it. I think every tour we always have a few skeptics come, and I think during the show or sometimes after the first song they go, 'OK, I can live with this.' And it really is like that; I've seen people's reaction. I'm telling you the reaction has just been phenomenal. I mean, I don't get the bad stuff like I heard other singers used to get when they filled in, with the people turning their back and all that stuff. But I had one guy flip me off and by halfway through the concert I had him singing with me, so that was really cool because at first it was pissing me off. I was like 'Yeah, yeah, screw you buddy,' and then I kept trying to get him to sing and as it went on, the guy started singing with me. But most of the time it's a great reaction. Judas Priest concerts are the most enjoyable concerts

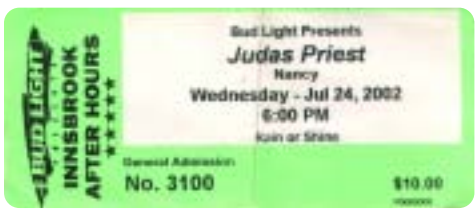
Dion DeTora

because the crowd sings and we have fun. We're not up there cussing the whole night. We're not up there doing obscene stuff all night; it's just a good heavy metal concert."

"I wish there was some drum and guitar solos," adds Ripper, addressing the rigors of such a demanding vocal gig night after night. "I barely have time to go back and change my shirt. There never has been with Scott. I tried to talk him into doing a drum solo before 'Painkiller,' but he never would, never does. We play what the songs are. You know, we play the guitar solos in the songs, we play the drumming in the songs. We don't do anything else, we don't tell any stories up onstage, we laugh a bit, say a few funny words in between songs, but we're about the music and sounding good and having fun. But I would take a few guitar or drum solos — let me get off the stage for a second."

January of '02 finally found the band putting a beating on America, Anthrax in tow for an intensive run through February, with Anthrax sending a bunch of strippers onto the stage for the final show in Auburn Hills, Michigan. In March and April it was back over to Europe (Squealer as support), and then a second leg in America through the summer.

As 2003 bled into 2004, the rumors of Rob Halford's impending invitation back into the ranks of Priest would persist and grow louder. As it turned out, the metal gods were listening . . .



ANGEL OF RETRIBUTION

(Sony/BMG, February '05)

Judas Rising
Deal with the Devil
Revolution
Worth Fighting For
Demonizer
Wheels of Fire
Angel
Hellrider
Eulogy
Loch Ness

24

"WE'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP OUR TESTICLES NEXT YEAR"

– Angel of Retribution

Whether the fans talked it into being, or whether it was management or the band themselves, the inevitable happened, and Priest was back in black intact. Rob Halford had returned, after a casual discussion around the *Metalogy* box set in Rob's kitchen, "the Camp David of heavy metal," at his Birmingham home, set it so. CNN was given the exclusive rights to announce the news, and on July 11 of 2003, they did just that, catapulting the band back into mainstream rock 'n' roll consciousness, perhaps still as a bit of an amusing '80s throwback, but loud 'n' proud in millions of family rooms all the same.

IT DIDN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, IT CERTAINLY DIDN'T. IT WAS LIKE 14 YEARS THAT INEVITABLY HAD TO HAPPEN.

Steven J. Messina

And not only did Ripper Owens expect a reunion with Rob, he had suggested it, or certainly gave the band his blessing. Ever the optimist, the move had allowed him to pursue other options, which he has, both with his own band, Beyond Fear, and a bigger fish, Iced Earth.

"As a matter of fact, everybody was really up front about it," says Metal Mike, now guitarist for a newly dormant (but never officially extinguished) Halford band. "It wasn't something we talked about every day. As I said, I was there to play in Halford. I wasn't concerned about Priest or what their management said. But they were up front. And this speaks to Rob's professionalism and John Baxter's professionalism. He said Rob and K.K. or Glenn met and talked, and nothing is in stone, but something might go down. And we were like, cool. We can prepare ourselves and think about what needed to be done and kind of feel out the situation. It wasn't like, 'Hey, by the way, Priest is going to get back together tomorrow' [laughs]."

And, as these things go, a bunch of nostalgia-mad Judas Priest "30th anniversary" tour dates were cooked up to make some cash heading into what would be a knee-trembler of an idea for all involved, a new Judas Priest studio album featuring the classic lineup.

"The main thing is that obviously we were very close in the early days, family-like, really," mused K.K. in June of '04, eight months ahead of issuing what was to be *Angel of Retribution*. "Obviously, Rob knew my family and I knew his family well, and it was actually Rob's mom and dad's 50th wedding anniversary, which is obviously the big one, isn't it? So I was invited to that and of course Rob was there and that was the first time I'd seen him in many, many years. And we didn't discuss anything about anything at the time. It was just a celebration, a big bash. And we got on well, type of thing, and it was around that time we were getting very good offers from promoters around the world, including offers for Ozzfest. This is going back a while a bit now, and people were saying, if the band got back together, we'd like to offer this and offer that and do some pretty cool things. So we were kind of aware of the fact that there

Chris Casella

was a demand there, throughout the industry. Up until then, we were just aware that there was demand from the media and the fans, basically [laughs]. We were always aware that there was a demand for the original lineup. Things were kind of turning a little bit in the music industry where promoters were thinking, 'Well, if we put Priest back together, we could do this.' I guess what I'm trying to say is that a lot of other bands that were hopeful to replace us, really, in the marketplace, hadn't really fulfilled expectations, I don't think. I think that's kind of across the board with promoters and record companies, to be honest. And so they're probably thinking, 'Good ol' Priest; get Priest back together, and we can do some good business together again,' you know? [laughs]

"It just kind of came together, bit by bit, to make sense. And obviously the box set and the remasters . . . we were having to work with Rob on that, collaborate, and then eventually what Rob did had run its course and what we did had run its course. And we did a couple of records, obviously, with Ripper, a couple of world tours, and obviously Tim was a great vocalist. But I think he was showing signs of wanting to be himself and to project himself and to do his own thing as well. So in a nutshell, it didn't happen overnight, it certainly didn't. It was like 14 years that inevitably had to happen [laughs]."

But, explains K.K., there was no big sit-down in the months or years before the fateful kitchen party summit that brought the idea to a head. "No, it was never that. We were always very tentative, do you know what I mean? I think it was just one of the standoff things; we didn't really want to approach Rob and say, 'Well, how you feel? Do you want to rejoin the band?' And he didn't want to say, 'Hey lads, how do you feel about me rejoining the band?' It was never actually spoken, you know. Call it

Steven J. Messina

IT'S JUST LIKE OPENING THE DOOR AND WALKING BACK IN THAT ROOM; THINGS REALLY HAVEN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH.

stubborn, whatever you will, but it just kind of had to be seen to be taken for granted that something was going to happen."

"That's still an open book," said Rob, a couple of years earlier, while indicating something could happen. "I never close that possibility in my mind. I've always felt that there is still something to be said. There's still a final chapter in that book to be finished. The thing about Priest is that it's like family or friends. You can see each other five years from now and it's just like you were with each other yesterday, because you've lived and experienced so much of your life together — time really is of no consequence. It's just like opening the door and walking back in that room; things really haven't changed that much."

Downing says that the patching up of relationships was approached a bit differently for

each member of the band. "To be honest, the one thing is that Glenn didn't actually make that event, Rob's parents' anniversary. He had commitments; he had to go to Spain. I think it was a lot easier for me and Ian, really, because of that initial meeting with Rob. It wasn't until we all actually sat down in the same room, which was a long time after that event, where total acceptance of what lay forward showed itself."

Just as there had to be tour dates to accompany the hubbub, there were two bits of product issued to support the cause. In November of '03, Sony released the *Electric Eye* DVD, which featured all of the band's promotional videos, as well as rare English TV appearances from the mid '70s. There was also a concert video, filmed in Dallas, Texas, on the Fuel for Life tour. Much more substantial was the aforementioned *Metalogy* box set, which featured extensive liner notes from eminent New York critic and Priest expert Bryan Reesman, as well as four CDs and one DVD of content, none of which one would class as more exciting than the rarities added to the remasters — just some live tracks, really. The packaging was nice though, the individual card sleeves and booklet housed in a swell leather 'n' studs–festooned box. The DVD contained the December 12, 1982, Memphis show from the band's *Screaming for Vengeance* tour, the set also to be issued as a stand-alone DVD in 2006.

"It's so close to being done, it isn't funny," continued K.K., anticipating the new album's release, which would eventually see delays past Downing's stated projections. "We've got a few days of guitar overdubs, and maybe one day of vocals to do. But it's there, it's pretty much complete, and we've played it to the record company. But obviously, we're on tour now in Europe. I'm in Prague at the moment and it's going fantastic. We must have played to about

10,000 people last night — it was sold out last night here in Prague. Luckily we brought the record company out — Sony, and the promoters — so we're talking about putting on a worldwide tour, releasing the album in early November, and then get Christmas out of the way. We've already put dates in in the U.K. and Japan. But yes, we've literally got to put the finishing touches to it, at the end of this leg, prior to the Ozzfest. And then obviously we've got to give it to our producer to start the mixing process, and then we want some involvement in that along the way. And then when you give it to the record company, they preferably want six to eight weeks to turn it around. But it's good, because we're doing all these festivals throughout Europe to re-present ourselves, and we're doing 29 shows with the Ozzfest, throughout the States. It will be great to get out there and reconsolidate our position, and obviously put a world tour together, which will be totally revamped, the whole thing, for a Priest spectacular in 2005."

Steven J. Messina

WE'RE ALL CONVINCED THAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP OUR TESTICLES NEXT YEAR AND THAT THE FANS ARE NOT GOING TO STRING US UP.

Adds K.K. about the record to come, "The only thing I can say is that at the moment we're all convinced that we'll be able to keep our testicles next year and that the fans are not going to string us up — you know, 'Hang on, this is not what we want.' Hopefully it's going to be pretty much exactly what everyone wanted from Priest. We think there's a lot of good stuff on there. It's pretty long; we've got a lot of material left over, so we're going to do our best. But we're going to be playing it to a few people just as a backup, and saying 'Hey, is this OK?' [laughs]. You know what I mean? Maybe we'll drag some fans in off the street and say 'Hey, do you like this or not?'

"When myself and Glenn and Rob got together to start the songwriting process, it happened very quickly. The songs came about

Chris Casella

very quickly. And immediately, especially obviously with Rob's voice, it sounded pretty much like traditional Priest. So without having to look to any other influences, I think we were able to look to ourselves and what we do best. Priest as the band has always pushed the boundaries of rock and metal as we know it, a little bit here and there, and we're always trying to capture the ears of some new listeners, to join the ranks. But I think pretty much you'll hear songs on there that could be on the *Painkiller* album, could be on *British Steel* maybe. Who knows? There could be a song on there that could've been on *Turbo*.

"I think we've been pretty productive. We haven't hung around. We put the songs together pretty quick, as I say. The recording process inevitably slows things down a little bit, with today's technology, everything has to sound pretty good. But we haven't been beating around the bush. We got on with it. I think when people hear the album, they'll probably hear us just trying to fulfill the band's wishes by doing those sort of trade-off solos and stuff that we used to do a lot more of on the early albums. I think that's been our main intention, is to appease the fans who really want to hear that from us."

Turning attention to Rob, K.K. explains that he hasn't seen any material changes in him. "Rob, by and large, he's a gentleman. People might think that he's a dark, sinister, aggressive character. But he's a mature gentleman, very professional in his approach to everything he does. Rob being away from the band, I think he's very much got a grip on what is right for

David Bridge

Zach Peterson

us and what isn't. He's pretty cool, really, amicable, democratic in the studio. The fact is, he's coming up with a lot of ideas — that's the main thing. You know, if you run dry, people's tempers start to get a bit frayed. But fortunately for us, there's been an abundance of nonstop flowing ideas, that's kept everybody's interest. He's been really good. And Rob really does have a good sense of humor, because we all come from the same neighborhood. He's a very funny guy, you know. A lot of people don't know this, but he's a very good impressionist. At the moment, I don't know if you never seen a series *Bo'Selecta*, it's a U.K. thing, but . . . Rob has always been able to do these impressions. He can take virtually anybody off. So he amuses us endlessly. But he doesn't make that well known, really and he's reluctant to do it. He just comes up with it to amuse himself, but obviously at the same time he amuses us."

K.K. offered an update on his fabled manor house. It's his sanctuary and something he's proud of, having spent a lot of energy, time and money on its upkeep. "To be honest, I've got a development going on. I've constructed a golf course facility and a leisure facility, just something outside of music I have an interest in doing, really. And it's a beautiful estate that I have. I've got a kind of an interest. I like to see things manicured, everything neat and tidy, and maybe I can create something else for people to enjoy other than records [laughs].

"The golf course is all part and parcel of it. Because it's a large house — I don't have a family, a direct family, wife and children — basically I thought, well I've got something here that I'd like people to enjoy, you know? Have a nice bar and swimming pool and stuff like that. Just something . . . I suppose eventu-

Eduardo Greif

ally I'll move to somewhere else on the estate, but yes, I'd like to see myself become quite successful at doing that, hopefully. It's always been a project, you know, rather than me doing some stupid solo album or something [laughs]. I've just concentrated on Judas Priest, which has been my life, so it's basically been a bit of a side project, something I've been able to do. It's a beautiful estate; it's just over 300 acres, you know, in a ring fence. There are beautiful water features and valleys and stuff like that. It's just something for me to be able to develop slowly in the years and years to come. Maybe when I hang up the axe [laughs], just enjoy that, you know? I actually started out life in hotel and catering, so I'm quite at home in that situation. Also I've got a studio there and I'm making lots of noise, so maybe it will keep people away, who knows [laughs]?"

While things were looking great for Priest in the present, a name from the band's past was writing a darker chapter. In January of 2004, former Priest drummer Dave Holland was found guilty of one count of attempted rape and five counts of indecent assault, regarding a 17-year-old male with learning difficulties, to

Greg Olma

whom Holland had been giving drum lessons. The aforementioned Tom Galley (from Dave's old band Trapeze) offers some thoughts on the Dave he knew way back then and the Dave who found himself in the worst bind of his life. "Because they operated out of Cannock — because that's where we all came from, and Dave was from Northampton — Dave lived with our mom and dad for years. He spent more time at mom and dad's house than he did probably at home. Life after Trapeze obviously led him in a totally different direction. I honestly think that what he ended up in — and this is my own opinion — wasn't totally as black as it was painted. I think he was naïve in all aspects of it, and I think he was naïve in the way he presented himself in court as far as a defense was concerned. I mean, we were all shocked. It wasn't something where, yeah, we knew what was going on. No, we didn't. We were all as shocked as everybody else.

"But yes, Dave, while he was with Trapeze, he lived in Northampton when we weren't rehearsing or playing. But he lived with my mom and dad while he was in Cannock, while they were playing, which was 50 percent of the year. And obviously, when you're a three-piece, you're very much family. So what happened to him in his later life was a big shock. I mean, the footage they showed on TV of him going to court, when I saw him, the first thing I said to my wife was, 'He's going to go down.' Just because of the way he looked! Being in the position he was, and being in Judas Priest after Trapeze . . . we had had for a few years in Britain a big push against pedophilia. He was

Greg Olma

going to get roasted, but he didn't approach it in that way. His attitude was, to me, totally naïve. If you saw him, going to court, you would say 'Yes, he looks like one.' If he's going to make a case, visual is everything. You could tell he was going down; there was no alternative. The problem is, all those years, in one fell swoop, are nullified."

Final word on this unsavory subject goes to Glenn Hughes. "It's very difficult, because I've known Dave for 35 years. All I can say about the Dave Holland thing is that nobody understood what was going on, or had any inkling of what was happening, if it did happen . . . I don't know. It's none of my business. It's God's business. But Dave has always been a great drummer. All the other stuff that has happened to him, it's God's business; it really is."

WE'D BE REALLY, REALLY STUPID TO THROW THE TOWEL IN A SECOND TIME.

Back to the cheerier business of Judas Priest, K.K. seemed to be enjoying the expected renewed interest in the band, given the return of Rob. "Yeah, to be honest, with Rob back in the band now, obviously the venues have been massive, the ones we've been playing on our own. Like last night, we just had Soulfly supporting us. We're playing to thousands of people, and I think when Rob gets a taste of

HEY, WE COULDN'T GET MUTT LANGE, SO I GUESS OUR NEXT CHOICE IS YOU.

Steven J. Messina

that again after all these years . . . well, we'd be really, really stupid to throw the towel in a second time. I think we're still good for it [laughs]. Anyone who comes and sees us on the Ozzfest . . . I mean, the reception for us has been absolutely, seriously rapturous. We just did a festival in Holland and we were headlining, Scorpions before us and Alice Cooper and Motörhead, a stack of bands, and it was just like old times and it was great. And now that Priest are back, I do feel that there is a good faction of the metal fans that are saying, 'Yeah, Priest can really do it; let's go forward.'"

And forward they went — *Angel of Retribution* would be recorded over the course of six months, with Roy Z producing, the band utilizing studios in both L.A. and in Worcestershire, U.K. There was thought of clawing back Tom Allom to provide a golden and nostalgic touch, but then it was figured that he'd been out of the metal scene too long, and that the guys should go with a current, enthusiastic, youthful pro, Roy proving all of that and more by helping Bruce Dickinson make resoundingly better albums than Maiden.

"I went to dinner with those guys," explains Z, with regard to getting the gig, "and I remember Glenn said something like, 'Hey, we couldn't get Mutt Lange, so I guess our next choice is you.' Something like that. But he was kidding. Of course I said yes. So schedule-wise, I knocked everything out. There were some projects I was working on and I said, 'Hey, sorry, I gotta do something.' I didn't tell one person. I mean, my mom knew, my brother knew, my girlfriend knew, and that was about it. It's hard to do; you just gotta keep your mouth shut. That is something I learned a while ago. I have to have that respect and I have to give people that I work for that sovereignty, that feeling that they're in control."

"I'm not gonna lie and say I never stressed out," says Roy, about the pressures of producing Priest under these circumstances. "I was stressed quite often. It was in the forefront of my mind that it had to be the right record. Personally, I didn't want to settle for anything that wasn't good. And I know those guys, in their own hearts, didn't want that either. So, it was a lot of going back and forth, but I think at the end of the day we got there, hopefully. Hopefully the fans like it. All I have to say is it was a lot of work, but it was fun too. It was done,

really, in a smart way. They gave me the songs, the demos, that they felt they wanted to put on their record. So, I lived with them and I got to know the songs and I just studied them. Really rough demos, but the songs came across. They had vocals, but they were sketches and some of those sketches were really good. Like I said, it was a really smart way to go about it — I got to live with the songs for a good while."

"I have to put on my Teflon suit [laughs] in case objects start flying my way," says Roy, about dealing with all those opinions in the studio. "No, people, once they get to know me, they know I'm a passionate person and I'll always, at the end of the day, let the artist decide. But I suggest things, or I'll say, 'Hey, you might want to look at this.' But these guys . . . it's hard sometimes because I don't have the big platinum records on my wall. Whenever you meet someone new or you bring someone into your circle, like they brought me in, you try to get to know the people and vice versa. So, I'm sure I was put to some test somewhere down the line, but I didn't catch it. I was just myself. I always make it a point just to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, for all of us, especially looking at ourselves. I'm at a point now where it could be the biggest band in the world and if I think they're jerk-offs, I'll quit, I'll go home. Life is too short, and you give up big chunks of your life to do this. I don't care how much money you're going to make; if it's not for the right cats, then . . . I'm not a quitter either but I just wouldn't put myself in the position to work for them. I'd remove myself; I wouldn't even start, if I had a hint that someone is a jerk. You give up six months, eight months, a year of your life — you're never gonna get that back. But these guys are some of the classiest dudes in the world. And what was cool on their side was that they gave

Sean Langlands

me respect. I had to earn it, but at the end they gave me respect. That is why I think really highly of those cats."

Asked about advanced studio techniques, Roy says "there are no tricks — it's all about the tunes, performances. There's nothing to trick anybody with. It's just good ol' songs, right down the heart songs and special, magic performances. The sound is the last thing you worry about, you know. Because what's a good sound? So and so's record sounds good, but how is that going to sound in ten years? So I had to make sure we didn't time-stamp the thing. That's the only thing I could say I was nervous about. I could put on an AC/DC record, and it's not the best-sounding record, but you know what? The performance and the songs — that's what creates longevity. That's why Priest have longevity, because they've always had good songs and performances . . . that's why they are who they are."

"Rob is the chosen one," muses Roy. "He's one of the chosen ones. He's one of the ones

Greg Olma

that God gave this amazing gift to. There are only a few of those people walking this earth. Rob used to blow our minds. He used to blow my mind. He would get on there and he would just belt. At that point, you go like, 'I can't believe this is happening.' There are very few guys that could touch him. And all I know is, since I can remember, Glenn and K.K. have always kept up. They are amazing guitar players as well. I kept thinking to myself, 'These guys are 50-what? And they're playing like this?' It was great man."

"It was all done on ProTools, the whole nine yards," says Roy, although there's an organic old school quality to the final result that wisely steers clear of anything antiseptic. "Unfortunately to go onto tape these days . . . well, now that they stopped making tape, it's even harder. I miss tape so much. It's so much harder to make these records now. It's like you work three times as hard now. In the old days with tape, you put it down and that was it. You didn't have to look at it, you didn't have to do all this crap that you have to do now. And you didn't have to try to make it sound like tape. The records that I made with tape stick out because they were done on tape. You can make it perfect with ProTools, but at the same time, that's not what I go for. To me, like I said, it's the song, the performance. You want a perfect record, go buy a new age or jazz or classical record. This is rock 'n' roll. It's having the grit, the pain. You want to leave the pain and grit in there. But there are a lot of great moments on the record. All I know is, within the first minute, when you put that thing on, you know that Priest is back. After that it's just such a great ride. It's like a movie, man. It's like going on a trip."

Angel of Retribution, for the most part, fulfilled fans' wishes with respect to delivering a classic Judas Priest sound. Surveying the ter-

Eduardo Greif

rain, one hears a lot of *Painkiller*, a little bit of *Ram it Down*, and in smaller doses, samplings of the four albums before that. Essentially therefore — and oddly — there's a lot of '80s moments inherent.

For cover art, the band went with an impressive Mark Wilkinson painting, a mechanical *Painkiller*-like being which is the angel of the title on offer. The figure gets some additional treatments in the CD booklet, another notable element being the incorporation of the Judas Priest cross or pitchfork into the lettering of the logo. The band were definitely looking for an image that would work well onstage and on merchandise as well, Glenn adding, with respect to the meaning, that it is the angel from *Sad Wings* transformed or "risen up" and seeking retribution, Rob seconding the motion, that it — and the song "Judas Rising" — represents the figure leaving a gloomy, despondent state and rising up with optimism and energy.

Steven J. Messina

Commented Rob on the title chosen for the album, "The word 'retribution' was there right from the get-go, and we were just stuck to that word. I think Glenn came up with it. What that word implies, wrapped around the reunion and the attitude and all of the feelings that we still try to convey . . . it was a good word to propel us on. And then K.K. brought in the idea of using angel, with the word retribution. And again, as you probably know, the artwork was an inspiration from *Sad Wings of Destiny*, which basically shows that forlorn, despondent angel figure in hell. And when we were able to progress with that idea and see the final artwork, it just made sense to call it *Angel of Retribution*. It all really ties into the band, and what we're about."

Opener "Judas Rising" is a bit of a pulverizer evocative of the Ripper era, notwithstanding the amusing "Victim of Changes" opening sequence. Not sure if the lyric matches up so well with the title sentiment, which is essentially sort of rote and obvious. It's great to hear Rob back and cackling though, and all told, one quickly cops to the fact that the sound of reunion-era Priest is going to be less mechanical than the harsh output of the Ripper era. Rob states the obvious, that it's an expected set list opener. "'Judas Rising' is a spectacular part of the show, in conjunction with the special effects and the backdrop and everything. The essence of that song, the message it conveys, that really is something we felt needed to be included." Still, the song has a frustrating push/pull quality to it, given Scott's plodding one-and-three, double bass drum pattern. You almost peg the song as a typical fast opener, but then realize it's actually quite slow.

"Deal with the Devil" picks up the pace, its groove irresistible, its hooks effortless like most of *Screaming for Vengeance*, the initial idea for it springing from Roy Z, hence the only credit on the album not going to the tried and true trinity of Tipton, Halford, Downing.

"That's a little bit of an autobiography, isn't it?" says Rob. "You're talking about where Priest came from. It's a bit tongue-in-cheek. I was reflecting on some of the unfortunate things that have happened, like that unfortunate moment in Reno. Not trying to lighten the moment or make fun of it, but give an overview on how people in those days — not so much now — how they used to observe metal in a different way. And we were saying, 'Yeah, we made a deal with the devil.' Tongue-in-cheek, of course."

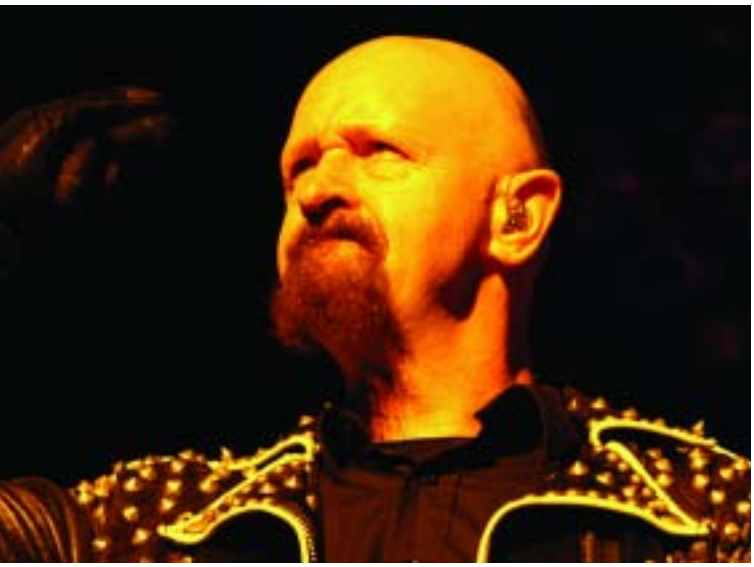
K.K and Glenn send their fans into shredder heaven with this one, rattling off salvo after salvo, using different tones, speeds . . . it's something Priest is known for and this

Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

is one of their lustiest battle royales of all time. Lyrically, there are references to the band's rehearsal space from the days of yore, back in Birmingham, the "black country": Holy Joe's was the school room attached to the local church, which was commandeered by the pastor named Joe, who, Halford says, was regularly nipping into the consecrational wine. There's also a wistful line about tearing down the M series of highways in Britain to deliver the metal, a time-honored pursuit for many a British headbanging institution.

"Revolution" was the pre-album teaser track, and it definitely had the faithful animated, taking sides, debating like hellions. The rhythms were almost nu-metal or jungle (although that intro bass lick was actually recorded in the '70s!), as were some of the tones and vocal patterns. Still, there was no mistaking that it was a brave, ambitious, sophisticated track. And, once the full album arrived, it stayed a defiant, out-there, eccentric track, given the rest of the record's fully '80s-directed constructs. And once the "second" chorus breaks in at about 1:38, *Angel of Retribution* had its magic moment, its locus of headbanged exhilaration. This is one that won folks over methodically through repeated plays. Its chorus drummed itself into your head, and the "time for retribution" bit lined up with "Judas Rising" to keep the band on track, message "framed." Notes Rob, "There's just that thundering bass riff, another definitive, spectacular, riffy Priest moment. And again, it's about the attitude of Priest, never holding back, always being determined to deliver a full roar, a full experience; that one's got everything in it."

"Worth Fighting For" contributes greatly to what Roy has said about the record being a trip. Four tracks in and Priest have delivered four vastly different styles, this one being a smooth and drinkable hard rocker — a tall glass of water, as they say — with a passionate lyric and vocal, seductive axes from Glenn and K.K., a classic one-note bob from Ian, all atop



Steven J. Messina

Steven J. Messina

a relaxed and jammy open high-hat groove from Scott. It is one of the great (yet unsung) commercial tracks from the Priest catalog, and to top it off, its chorus is gorgeous. With a title like that, one would expect it to be yet another career retrospective song, but Halford turns in a poignant message about relationships, and the fact that they are often worth fighting for.

Remarked Halford about the lyrical direction of the album in general, "The tracks are all over the place, as they always are. You know, if you're in a fierce world of power and speed and aggression, obviously the language has to attach itself to that. We have a trademark, a heritage if you will, in certain ways that we use language on certain types of songs. To some extent, the bulk of my work in Priest has been away from the real world as a lyricist, which is that I'm not talking about real issues in real time. However, I am talking about real issues in fantasy time, so to speak, ambiguous time, smoke-screen time. So I'm still using that way of displaying the language in the Priest lyrics on this album. The writing roared out of us; it was a blur. One minute I'm writing the album in October, and the next minute we're almost coming into the end of this big world tour that we did all over Europe and then North America. The floodgates opened, basically. Me and Ken and Glenn didn't really have any idea of what was going to happen, in terms of our reunification musically. But the chemistry was still there; it was as though the tap had been turned off, and then the tap had been turned back on again and everything came roaring out the faucet and into the machines and saved. It was just an ever-flowing experience and we were delighted that we never hit a wall. There were never any moments of frustration or the well drying up; it was just all there, just coming out and waiting to be assembled."

Next up is "Demonizer" which doesn't push the envelope, really (and yes, Priest have delivered another "er" song, matching Manowar lick for lick with their "of" titles), sounding a bit like a cross between "Judas Rising" and any number of Ripper-era dentist drills. Still, there's an intimacy, a humanity, in the track brought forth by

Steven J. Messina

Halford's anguish-filled vocal and Roy's analog-like production — no mechanized sounds, each instrument separate and discernible.

"Demonizer" is yet another double bass drum rocker, Scott Travis and his abilities allowing the band to write repeatedly in this vein. But Travis downplays his chops when it comes to contributing to the Priest. "I think I've made an impression on people when I've been given the opportunity, and at the same time, when I play the older stuff, which is mostly the Dave Holland–era material, I like to play like he plays it. I may throw in one or two flares of my own, but for the most part, if I were a fan, and I went to see this band or any other band that had old material, I'd want to hear it the way it was recorded, or the way I remember hearing it on the record. So in that respect, I don't change things very much, the stuff that Dave did or Les Binks, the drummer prior to Dave. And Les was a really great drummer, so some of the stuff that we do now from his era is fun to play. I love 'Beyond the Realms of Death,' and we used to do 'Exciter.'"

Remarking cautiously on the lack of imagination inherent in Dave Holland's parts, Scott says, "But you know, in hindsight, the band had their biggest years with Dave. I think *Screaming for Vengeance* was probably their peak. And then maybe after that it was *Turbo*, which was a huge seller. *Screaming for Vengeance* was the one that really put them on the map, as far as making them cross over from being just an underground metal band to all of a sudden a commercially successful band, especially in the United States. So between that and *British Steel*, and like I say, *Turbo* and *Defenders*, those were their biggest years, income-wise and in every other respect. How can you argue with that success? Believe me, I was one of the guys in the audience, and I saw the *Screaming for Vengeance* tour and I said, 'Man, I gotta play for that band.' I didn't feel that the drummer was up to par with the rest of the musicians, but like I say, having said that, they were definitely peaking from a commercial standpoint."

"Wheels of Fire" impressively recalls the magic that is Accept, Priest chugging along like

David Bridge

Mark Gromen

a freight train, the song written simply, and right to the crux of the hypnotic headbang. As with many wily Priest constructs, this one's pre-chorus is in fact better than the chorus, more in the spirit of striving for song, versus a chorus that is merely striving for metal.

"Angel" is the album's ballad, Priest completing the circuit with respect to their much-vaunted "light and shade" even though this one lacks magnetism, sounding dour and not much else. "Hellrider" is a ripper of a successful rocker, a wholly new style for the album late in the sequence, and as catchy as it is uncompromisingly heavy. Says Rob, offering an amusing example of his tendency to be verbose and circular, "'Hellrider' is just another Priest definition of that style, that genre of metal, that we created all those years ago. It's full of character and personality in the same vein as 'Sinner' or 'The Sentinel.' If you look back at the

Zach Peterson

history of Priest, there are always one or two songs that are kind of a new adventure for us musically. So I remember when Glenn and Ken and myself sat down to put that together, I suggested the idea of taking that kind of late '50s, early '60s pulp fiction–type emotion, and bringing that into the style of the song, which, again, was something Priest had never done." Lyrically, Rob continues to massage in references to past Priest songs, while vocally, he goes for a spitting staccato style which gives way to a bit of a weak chorus, which we'll excuse given the superlative verse riff.

"Eulogy" is more or less a brief and somber lead-in to "Loch Ness," more catalog references cluttering the fridge like so many Post-it notes. Lyrically there's no real tie-in, but its brevity, solitude and positioning before the album's interminably long closer ensures that it will be forgotten in the Priest catalog. Still, it's nice to hear Tipton sitting down at the piano again.

Comments Halford, with respect to these little inserted references to past lyrics, "That was just a cool idea that Glenn suggested to me. He said, 'What do you think about this? Is there a way you can maybe throw in some statements in the songs where you might talk about "The Tyrant" or "Sinner" or something?' And, you know, for me as a lyricist, again it's just another interesting way of looking at the possibilities, so as we felt appropriate, we threw in those references to some of our past moments, and I think it sounds really cool. It works within the subject matter of each song, so it's not as though it's creating a look of confusion or anything. It was important that any of those statements that went in were correct, within the message of each lyrical piece in each track. That isn't the exercise that we tried to achieve; it was just a cool idea. I think it definitely evokes the things. As you are listening to the songs and you hear a statement like that you go, 'Oh man, I remember this or remember that.' It's just an older view of a lot of things. All of the glory of the band has come together within these ten tracks, which was purely unintentional; it just seems to have happened that way. There is a wealth of material, isn't there? There are like 13 or 14 odd studio albums, 130 or 140 plus songs. That's why it's important that everything connects one way or another. As much as we are still intent to try and make every record distinctive and individual, so they do stand on their own — legs away from each other — this one seems to coalesce; it just seems to bring it all under one big metal roof."

IT JUST SEEMS TO BRING IT ALL UNDER ONE BIG METAL ROOF.

As well, Rob has mentioned that the simple fact that this was a reunion album gave credence to the idea of reminding fans of the old classics.

Angel of Retribution closes with "Loch Ness," a rare Priest epic considered by almost any Priest-watcher to be a laughable error of judgment on the part of the band. First off, the idea is a nonstarter, the cliché of it all (yet another heavy metal monster), causing raised eyebrows that nobody — and that includes Roy Z with his supposed bullshit detector — raised his hand and said, "This is stupid." No favors are proffered with the musical presentation of the track, Glenn and K.K. turning in a dull, plodding riff under which Scott can do nothing but flounder. Final hook in the fish comes with the song's abominable Soviet-era chorus — if anybody is left championing this song at this point, well . . . let's leave it at that.

Rob actually collars this track as a lyric he is particularly proud of on the album, and, coupled with similar call-outs by the guys in interviews, one gets the sense that there was a sort of circling of the wagons going on. It's as if the band saw that they were getting the stick for this weak link on a strong album, and the guys had formed a huddle and deemed it necessary to offer it a leg up, in much the same manner Rod Smallwood bizarrely brings up the Blaze-era albums when prompted for nice bits from the Maiden catalog.

"I carried that song in my head for over 20 years now," muses Rob. "I remember we were up in Inverness, in Scotland, in Loch Ness, and just sitting by the loch at two o'clock in the morning, and just looking at the thing. It's very, very ominous and sinister. And that never really left me. And in the writing sessions, I mentioned to Glenn and K.K. that I'd got this idea for this song. And as ever, with some of the things I come forward with [laughs], it's like, 'I've got this idea for this song about the Loch Ness monster,' [laughs] and they're like, 'What?!' 'Yeah, just listen to what my feelings are.' And I had already mapped out some lyrics and some melodies. You know, we just know. We knew it was going to work, so we went away and made that huge piece of work at the end of *Angel of Retribution*, and I'm completely proud of that.

Zach Peterson

"It's really bizarre, because we just don't know where these things come from. Suddenly out of the blue, I think I was in San Diego, just walking around to get some lunch, and the melody, the chorus, 'Loch Ness, watchers of the deep,' just came to me. I've never quite understood how and why that happens. But the lyric and the melodies all came into my head, and I just ran back to my apartment and got my little portable cassette recorder and put it down quickly, because you have a tendency to forget these things if you don't nail it. And there it was. And that's what I presented. I sang the chorus

a capella to Glenn and K.K., and they said, 'Let's do it, let's go for it, and let's see what we can put together.' And it ended up to be what I feel is a real spectacular moment for Priest."

In fact, the story Rob relates takes on a bit of extra poignancy when it is revealed that the tale originates in the mid-'70s, with the loch musings happening as the band played the pubs up and down Scotland and the north country, sleeping in their van.

Posits K.K., "We know a lot of people know of us for the rapid-fire guitar riffs and Rob's screaming vocals, but this song is kind of a regression into what some bands used to do. I used to buy old vinyl that had just two songs on one side sometimes, and it was cool. As long as it keeps things fairly interesting and moving, there was no reason not to do an epic. It gives people the chance to turn off the lights, lie down, and enter this visual landscape and drift off. When I first got *Electric Ladyland*, I put that on, kicked everyone out of the house, turned all the lights off and just totally engrossed myself into the atmosphere in the music. You don't seem to get songs like this nowadays. Everyone's attention span is so short. It is an experiment for sure for us, but it would be great to try and play this live a few times out on the road. We'll see, but yeah, great epic song indeed."

Interesting that K.K. alludes to Hendrix, because the man's occasional tendency to lean Jimi's way emerges full flare late in the track, K.K. wailing away in anguish, creating reptilian noises for miles. "The fans kept asking about solos and more solos," says Downing, always the one in the band to want to please the fans. "It was what they were craving, so we delivered the goods. Both Glenn and I pulled out some old guitars and amps for the recording and were quite surprised how good they still sounded. We had quite a lot of fun in the studio with the guitar sound and solos, and it all came together very well. Plus it felt great to let loose."

YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT MAN? ME NOT BEING ENGLISH, I'M SURE IT'S LIKE SOMEONE SINGING ABOUT BIGFOOT OR SOMETHING.

"Yeah, you know what man? Me not being English, I'm sure it's like someone singing about Bigfoot or something," added Roy, perhaps struggling for a rationale. "But I've never heard a song called 'Loch Ness' before and I don't think I ever will hear another one. So, what's wrong with it? To sing about that? To me, that song is one of my favorites because it encompasses all of the elements of Priest. It has the heavy riff, it has the melody, has the majesty, the glory. Rob's singing is way, way, way beyond, and K.K.'s wailing, doing his Hendrix thing at the end. So it's everything of the band in one shot. But it's not just about the monster, man, it's about the vibe. I've never been there but these guys have, and they said, 'No man, it's the vibe of the place.' It's the vibe of the place and you've got to picture yourself being in that vibe. Once you do that, and I picture myself being in a place like that, I've been to cool places like that but I've never been there. But once you do that and you listen to the tune, and you work on the tune, you go, 'This is cool, this is a trip, this isn't like some *Lord of the Rings* shit.' How cheesy is *Lord of the Rings*, dude? A weird concocted story with

elves and all this madness. So, the lyric, I could see that at first glance, the lyric you can go, 'Ummm,' but no man, it's deeper than that. It's not about a monster, it's about a vibe, a place and the legend of that monster. And what's that all about? It's like, what is this place hiding? That's what's cool about the tune. I would say to people that didn't quite get it yet, just be free and when the time is right, put it on, have a beer or two and put it on man. Check it out, with the headphones. It's a long song. That's like . . . you could put on 'Stairway to Heaven' and 'Kashmir' and still have some lunch [laughs]. But hey, it's what the song required, man. And you know what? It takes balls. They have other songs; they could have put other songs on there. They know what they're doing and it takes balls. Like I said, that song . . . it's that deep. People are gonna appreciate it more, if they don't already, in a year or a couple of years."

No they're not. But despite such an epic-sized misstep, fan and press reaction to the album was largely positive, and if one can compare Roy's positive comments surrounding "Loch Ness" to the album as a whole, you really do get a sense of both adventure and tradition, a wily, canny balance, and one that falls out of the best Priest albums. Two ballads, a hard rocker and a half, and then there's "Revolution," the bravest thing on the album not associated with the banality of an ode to a swimming lizard.

"I don't think we'd have reunited if we didn't believe that we could, to quote a Priest song, deliver the goods," reflects Rob, patting himself on the back for making an album accepted, to everyone's relief, as valid. "We knew how important this record was going to be and we were determined not to disappoint. It was an enormous amount of focus and energy on making sure that we delivered something that would be worthy, because it all connects with everything else that we're about. It's true to say that there was this extra-special magic that came back with the writing team. And then again, working with Roy in the studio, you know, he has to be acknowledged because he's done a sensational job in production. Instinctively, we felt the material was strong, but then it was a way of making that strength come through the speakers. That's where it took thousands of hours of work time in the studio. Now you can kind of sit back and relax and enjoy the record. It's great, isn't it?

"We kind of downplay all of the acclaim, because although we feel that it's wonderful to be acknowledged, we're just so focused. We're obviously ecstatic about the way it's being received but now it's time to take it out on the road and for everybody to have a great time at the performances and essentially get ready for the next one. We've been through a lot, haven't we? We've been through a lot in the 30 years we've been together. Whenever a glorious moment comes, like a platinum record or a Grammy nomination, anything like that, it's just an extra boost. It's an extra kick, it's the energy that drives us to keep going. Obviously it's important for any band to have that type of

Steven J. Messina

feedback, as much as just being in this band and making metal together. Anything else that comes is just so welcomed. But it is important to us. Not wishing to downplay the acclaim. God forbid we were getting the opposite with this release, but we're not. Internally we all feel very strong and confident, as I think we can feel now by the initial feedback."

Adds Halford on his superlative vocal performance on the album, "A lot of it just comes through pre-production and a lot of it comes through instinct. And then, as importantly, the really valuable contributions that Roy and Ken and Glenn make, because we're all in the studio together when I'm putting my vocal tracks down. I need these guys; I've always welcomed any kind of encouragement, and I think that is important. There are some things that I'm doing on this record that I've never done before — the vocal on 'Worth Fighting For' is kind of unique. But all of that, again, is brought about by a tremendous amount of discussion and trying things — some things work, some don't. Each song, again, I think from a vocal point of view, I've tried to display all of the capabilities of the voice as it stands right now. It's a very broad-based record for me as a singer. I've really enjoyed doing the vocal tracks on this release because the songs take you into so many different possibilities, especially 'Loch Ness,' which is just a monster. We just all worked terribly hard together, not just for the vocals, but every aspect of every single contribution was brought about by encouraging one another."

IT'S LIKE A ROLLER COASTER RIDE — AT THE END OF IT YOU WANT TO GET BACK ON AGAIN.

"We had a timeline to stay on, obviously," remarks Rob when asked about the moment when the guys looked at each other and

WE ALL HAVE OUR GOOD NIGHTS AND BAD NIGHTS, BUT I CAN'T RECALL IAN EVER HAVING A BAD NIGHT, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH.

announced the record finished. "I will say this, I think it came at a remarkable lick of speed, from the beginning, you know, the writing sessions to pre-production to recording to mixing to mastering. Some bands of Priest's status sometimes take a year to two years to make a record. This all came in at probably a little over six months. But you always feel you can or want to do more. That's where you kind of have to rely on the belief that you have in your producer, like we had with Roy. When Roy says, 'That's it; I've got it,' I'm convinced it's as much as we can do and as much as we need, what the song requires. Time to move on to another piece; you have to let go. But when the final moment happens, as it did in L.A. when we did the mastering, it's work really. You don't really let your emotions get too immersed in it, which might sound weird because you're working emotionally with music from the get-go. Each significant area of work has to be accomplished — you do the vocals, the guitar, the mixing, the mastering and then you say, 'OK, see you back in England on blah blah, such a date, and we'll start rehearsing.' You get too close to a record. You can't really enjoy it until you've let it go out of your system from the working process, the analytical side of what you do. Now I can listen to this record and can really enjoy it. I can really get lost in the music and have a great time with it. But when you're in the creative side of it, you're always looking and searching and critiquing everything you do."

"I love to hear it through my iPod," answers Rob, with respect to his favorite method of playback. "I think it's a great record to listen to through headphones. It's a wonderful experience just to put the headphones on and close your eyes and just get lost in the whole record, which is what I believe you can do. It's not a tedious record to listen to. It's got so much energy and excitement and information going on, that before you know it, it's over and done with and then it's like, 'I need to hear it again,' which I think is another important element, which is why we wanted to keep it down to ten tracks. Even though 'Loch Ness' comes in at over 13 minutes, we still felt that by the time everything had passed by you, after you had experienced those ten tracks, it was an energizing feel. In some instances I've heard music from whoever, and three of four tracks in, it's become a chore to listen to. We were determined to have ten specifically unique moments going on, so at the end of it you were ready to go around one more time. It's like a roller coaster ride — at the end of it you want to get back on again. It was all those things and more that you can get off this record. It sounds great blasting through the speakers or through your headphones or however you want to appreciate it."

Points out Scott Travis, "The way they write songs is kind of unique, but I think they've been doing it so long that it works for them. I mean, the three of those guys, K.K., Glenn and

Dion DeTora

Rob, get together and form the nucleus of the songs, and generally I'm not around, and neither is Ian. And they bring us in later on in the process. So really, it's hard for me to evaluate. When we recorded *Painkiller*, we were together as a band a lot of the time. Because they had written the stuff and we had rehearsed it for like, two or three weeks in Spain, and then we all went into the studio in France, and were living there, and recording every day. So we were together for the most part. There were some creative things that happened — maybe I would suggest an arrangement change or something like that. In other words, that one was more of a band together recording, whereas this album, those guys did the majority of the work in England, then we did some work in L.A. Some of the guys were there, some of them weren't present. So it was just kind of more spread out, if you will, more segregated, if that applies here. And for me, during the *Painkiller* record, that was my first record with the band, so I thought every record was going to be like that, from then on out. Rob left after that album and tour, so things changed, and we hadn't been together, for a good 13, 14 years."

Asked if he saw much in the way of arguing between the guys, Scott says, "No, I really didn't. I mean, obviously every band has differences of opinion, especially when it comes to the creative process. But no, and this is not bullshit, because everybody that knows me knows that I tell it like it is — that's why I don't get many interviews [laughs]. Some people don't want that. No, they really don't argue. They have a mutual respect for each other, and although there will be differences of opinion, especially in the creative process, they never fight. There's never things like name-calling or insults. I've been in other bands where the shit would hit the fan, and there would be personal insults flying around, and I would be like, wait a minute, this doesn't have anything to do with musical creation [laughs]. And I think that's one of the tributes that they've been around for 30-plus years, is that they have been able to get along, not only in close-confined quarters, but you have to remember back in the day, when they really didn't have a lot of money and they were spending even more time together."

Adds Travis on Ian Hill, his rhythm-section partner in crime, "Ian is just a fantastic human being period. Forget bass playing, forget band member — he's the most generous, nicest person you could ever meet. I'm always amazed. He never complains. He never has a bad day, he never speaks negatively about

someone or anything. Obviously, maybe something will tick him off at some point, but no, he really is — he's just a real sweetheart. You hear that about some people, and you go, 'Yeah, sure,' but it's true with him. As a bass player, he's definitely, again, I haven't recorded with that many guys, but he's so solid. And live, we've done so many shows this tour since Rob's been back, and several shows obviously with Ripper, and before that we were around with Rob on *Painkiller* . . . Ian is so frickin' solid every single night. We all have our good nights and bad nights, but I can't recall Ian ever having a bad night, to tell you the truth."

"I like working with both of them," says Travis, contrasting Chris Tsangarides with Roy Z. "I thought Chris was great. I mean, again, I don't listen to *Painkiller*. I haven't listened to the whole record, but before we start a tour, I'll practice on my own, and of course I'll pull up all the songs that I think we're going to play live, and I'll rehearse with them, and in listening to a lot off *Painkiller*, I mean, that really is a good record. And I'm not saying that because I'm on it. I've done some records where I would tell you they're not good. But that is a great record, in my opinion, from several different aspects. And Chris was a part of that, so again, you have to give the guy credit. I like Chris personally, I think he's funny and he's great to work with. And some other guys in the band might have a different opinion of him, but I don't know. And Roy, again, I'd never worked with Roy, but he was the same deal. He and I spent a lot of time together, just me and him in the studio at night, because the band would be together during the day, running through parts. This was in England — and the guys would go home to their homes. And Roy and I, being foreigners over there, we didn't have homes to go to; we had a hotel, but we would stay late and just work. So again we had a nice relationship. Because if you don't have a relationship with someone you're working with, whether it be an engineer or producer or whatever, that would make the record very difficult to make."

"I think *Angel* is one of the better albums," continues Scott. "Again, let me preface what I'm saying — obviously I'm not a songwriter on any of their records, so I have to be careful. It's their project. Anytime you do a record, it's your baby, so to speak. But just from a fan's perspective, I'd say it's one of the better albums that they've done. I mean it's better than *Ram it Down* [laughs]. But no, it's a really good record. It's so hard for a band like Priest, or Aerosmith, AC/DC or Van Halen, any band has been around a long time. They've had so many great albums, and for me personally, as a fan, I tend to listen to the older stuff, because you imagine the band . . . Again, picking AC/DC, go back to *Dirty Deeds* or *Highway to Hell*. You think, man, these guys probably didn't have a pot to piss on, they're struggling to make this record, they're sleeping in the studio, you know what I mean? I think that's the essence of rock 'n' roll, not when you get rich and have your own Hummer and your own mansion and, you know, you're going to meet from nine to five to

write music and then you're going to go home. I don't know, it takes the fun out of it, personally. But Priest has so many great records, it's hard to categorize *Angel*, because like I said, there are so many great records. I mean, *Screaming* is one of my all-time favorite albums, not just Priest records, all-time favorite records, as is *Stained Class*.

"But it's funny. We can't make a record that's going to be really old school, because then you get slammed by your fans and the press who say, 'Oh, this sounds like a piece of shit.' And if it sounds too cutting edge, like *Jugulator* and *Demolition*, then people blame them for getting away from their roots. I'm just thinking of the overall sound. Those two albums were kind of very technical and very sterile, if you will. Too machine-like. Whereas *Angel* sounds more like a real record with real musicians playing it and coming from the heart, so to speak."

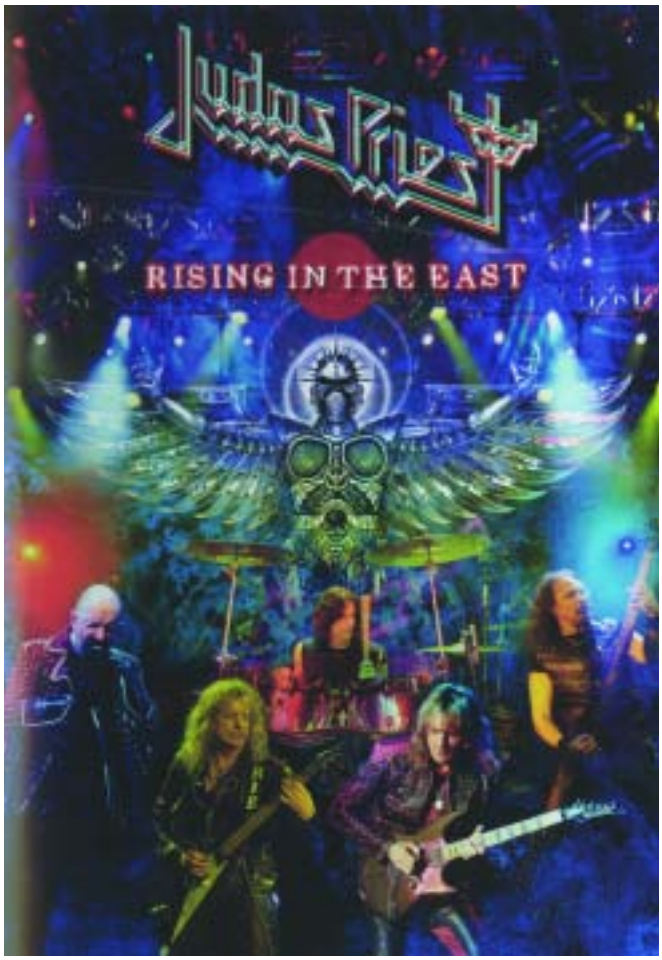
"*Angel of Retribution* for me is a classic Priest album," adds Tipton. "And what you have to remember . . . it's very difficult. When you've been apart for 14, 15 years, you never know if the writing magic is going to be there again, or the magic of the band. And also after a period of time like that, there's a whole lot of expectation. And even if we did a great album, that expectation can be disappointing to some people. So we decided what we're going to do is sit down and just write and enjoy ourselves; let's take all the pressure off. If the album is well received, great; if it wasn't, we've done our best. And that's what we did. We sat down and we enjoyed the writing and recording process. We never let too much pressure settle on our shoulders. We just said, 'Let's have a good time doing this. What will be, will be.' And I think that shows. That's the way I would sum up *Angel of Retribution*."

Turning to the travails of the road, Scott wonders, "What gets me up for it? I don't know [laughs]. I mean, when you tour, the two hours of the night when you play live is definitely the highlight of the day, so it doesn't take a lot to inspire you. The other 22 hours in the day are pretty monotonous; they're spent sleeping or traveling or eating or just doing the day-to-day things we all do as humans. The other guys . . . I guess when you've been doing it so long — and you've got to give them credit for being around 30-plus years — sometimes I guess the

excitement every night maybe wears off, I don't know. And even speaking personally, at the end of a tour, I think everybody is ready to go home for a while."

Scott cites "Painkiller" as one of the highlights of those two hours on stage, adding that "people want to hear me say that it's a real struggle, but it's not, because I've been doing it a long time. I think when the song is fun to play, even if it's technically challenging, I think it's easy to play, in that respect. Whereas you can play a song you don't like, and even if it's a simple song, for some reason it would just be more of a struggle, just because you don't like the song. But I'd have to say there's nothing we do in the set that's really awe-inspiring or challenging."

Angel of Retribution was issued as a regular CD as well as a DualDisc featuring the album, a documentary and seven live tracks, plus a separate CD and DVD version. Despite the large amounts of press and praise, and despite the band being back on Sony, the home label on all their triumphs, the album sold about 174,000 units stateside, not bad really, certainly in line with reunion-era records from Iron Maiden. Further on a business note, the Sanctuary Group, in October of '02, had acquired Trinifold Management. But on the ground it was business as usual, with Bill Curbishley managing the band, as well as The Who, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant. Behind the scenes was a nasty battle between Sanctuary on one side, and Rob and his manager John Baxter on the other. Sanctuary had ceased relevant promotion on the Halford band (beginning with *Live Insurrection* but most notably with *Crucible*) in hopes of breaking it up to prompt a Priest reunion, at the time, for a floated Priest/Iron Maiden touring package.



The *Angel of Retribution* tour spawned additional material in the form of a live DVD called *Rising in the East*, featuring fully five tracks from the new album: "Judas Rising," "Revolution," "Worth Fighting For," "Deal with the Devil" and "Hellrider," all of them fiery choices that translate well to the stage.

Rob contrasts delivering the goods to the Japanese in 1978 versus 2005. "When we first went there, it was a really unusual experience for us, and a totally new experience for the

Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

Japanese fans to see something like Priest showing up and playing live. We were one of the first metal bands to go over there, and we were always kind of wondering what was going to happen when the lights went down and the drapes went up. And I think, really, you can sense that on *Unleashed in the East*. Because you hear that kind of ecstatic screaming reaction at the end of every song, but during the performance, I mean, the fans at that point would literally just stand there, or in some cases just sit there, because they didn't know how to react. And just really take every single nuance of the performance in, in a very Japanese way, and then go explosive at the end of every song for a short moment in time, and get ready for the next one. But now, of course, it's just off the hook, you know? Just as mad as everybody else is, in that respect. It's definitely changed."

"We've incorporated the angel theme but made it look stronger," said Rob of the tour's stage set, just as they were getting ready to debut it. "The *Electric Eye* situation really wasn't taken out on an official full production. We were only able to kind of bring out parts of the show. This, for us, is the official kickoff, so to speak. It's all directed by the release, *Angel of Retribution*. That to us is what's the most important thing for the band right now,

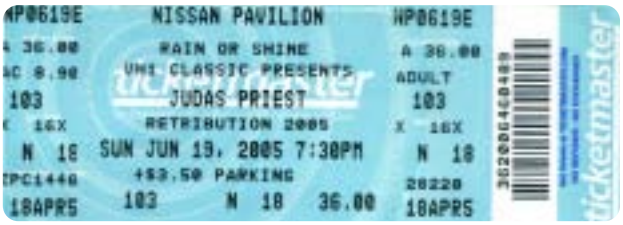
Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

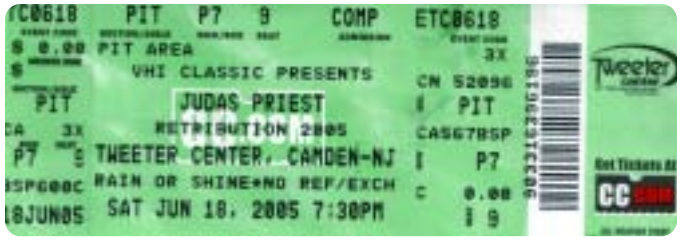
Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

getting everybody focused on these new songs and this new record, and as I said, just basically reinstating everything that people love and want from Priest."

Rob goes so far as to say that the new set rivals the big stages the band put together in the '80s. "I think it's on the same level, I really do. I mean, I was looking through the *Metalogy* box set the other day, looking at all the pictures in there and all of the other things that we've got around us. You investigate . . . you're looking at what you've achieved and you try to maintain that essence but bring it out in a stronger display. It's the essence of metal, with all the chrome and all the Priest emblems and this incredible light show and the flags and the 50-foot-high man-lifts and all of the other stuff that we've got, the mirror balls, the smoke, the fire, the pyro — all of that. I don't think there is anybody else out there that carries this kind of production right now. This is what's so cool for us with the new metal fans that we're bringing in — this will be the first time for them, if they've never seen Priest before, to see this kind of spectacular, over-the-top heavy metal production. So yeah, it looks sensational.

"We've just run through 'Judas Rising,' and you know, again, whatever Priest does in the studio we should be able to recreate onstage. 'Judas Rising' is going to be a really spectacular moment; it just sounds phenomenal live. The way that song is interpreted, as a five-piece with no gimmicks as far as back-up tapes and this, that and the other, you know, ProTools running in the background — this is the band playing it live. That real honest connection is there; we've always tried to insist that the players play the music — that's very important to us. So, when we play 'Judas Rising' or 'Revolution' or any of the other songs, they sound great and they equally connect. This is the other great thing — it's all connecting with the rest of the material. What we've tried to do is touch on a little bit of everything in the Priest catalog. So it's a very comprehensive set list; it comes in at two hours, 20-something plus songs, so it's just a real feast and earful. It just takes you everywhere, almost through the entire history of the band. But we





always try and bring in an element of surprise and excitement in the production. All I can say is that, you know, the fans out there that are waiting for something spectacular and are waiting to relive all of these great experiences they may have had in the past, if they're hard-core Priest fans that have been on this big long journey with us — they're gonna be knocked out. It's very important for us that by the end of this world tour, whenever it finishes, that we've done the job as intended, which is to be renowned as the world's greatest metal band live. We're determined to leave people with that impression, and that means we pour in all of our resources and all of the necessary ingredients into making that become real. It's one thing to make that statement, but to actually make it come alive in front of your face and for you to see and hear, it is just part of the challenge."

With respect to a good chunk of the new album making the *Rising in the East* DVD, Halford explains that "the reaction to *Angel of Retribution* was so strong. We were a bit taken aback by the worldwide way the fans grabbed it and immediately got into the record, and wanted to experience these tracks live, and so we ended up doing, well, almost 50 percent of the record. And when you put a set list together, you're looking for the dynamics, and the journey through Priest's history, and try to incorporate things as much as you can from the back catalog. But we knew the fans were wanting to hear as much of *Angel of Retribution* as possible, so we were able to put those five in."

Adds Rob with respect to the heavy gear we see him wearing in the DVD, "There are many times I've almost passed out [laughs]. That comes with the gig. Again, it's all about the fans for us. We know that the fans have a built-in expectation about Priest coming to town, and for them it's a long wait. It could be a year, two years; in the reunion instance, over a decade. So we're determined, night after night, to do a show that people can never forget. And that means putting in 1000 percent from the stage, and looking at all the possibilities to utilize it to make a memorable night. So me doing all those costume changes and performing, much

HARDCORE PRIEST FANS THAT HAVE BEEN ON THIS BIG LONG JOURNEY WITH US — THEY'RE GONNA BE KNOCKED OUT.

the same as Glenn and Ian and K.K. and Scott, it's just something that needs to be done. You're out there doing a summer shed, in different parts of America and Canada, and onstage the temperature is 120 degrees down in Texas, and you've got to put 20, 30 pounds of leather and studs on your back. But you just do it, you know? And you forget about that when you are working. It's only when you get offstage and you've lost ten pounds of sweat and you're exhausted, that you realize you put yourself through it. But that's nothing; you don't even think about that."

A fitness regime is therefore key. "I think all of us are in that world now," muses Rob, "probably more so than the early years. Because, it takes its physical toll on you. We can't afford to go out onstage and be sluggish and slow. We really have to go out there and do the gig and let people see that we're still a very vital, physical band. I jog. That's important to do that. It's great for the lungs, because you have to take in massive amounts of oxygen if you're doing my show. But all of us are making sure we're in the best shape possible to perform."

Rob admits to huffing, in the past, a bit of oxygen onstage. "I did, but that was very, very, very long ago. Personally, I don't think it really works. It's a bit of a crock. I think it's mental. I think the conditions and the surroundings play a part in that as well. But I've had no real desperate moments. Yeah, it was just suggested that I keep an oxygen tank on the side of the stage. We're talking about 20-odd years ago. I tried it for a bit."

With the current album's elaborate stage set, Rob says that Priest flirted with the odd near-disaster. "I come up through that trapdoor on the left side of the stage, looking toward the stage from the audience, and for 'Judas Rising' I came down on the lift at the back, by the backdrop of the angel, and I came through the side of the stage on K.K.'s side, halfway through the song, to finish the song. And then I introduce 'Revolution' and climb to the top of the ramp, and then I go out on one of the front ramps. And as I got up to the top to walk across, the trapdoor was still wide open. There was this huge, black, gaping cavern of dark, and I put one foot in. And just because you've always got that running in the back of your mind, I was able to recover. But yes, I put my foot down and there was just nothing but open space, and I quickly realized that if I had got any further, it could've been a real Spinal Tap moment."

Recapping the touring situation with Rob back in the band, first off was the pre-album United tour, which was, as Rob might call it "just a magical moment of a great sing-along with the Metal God." The set list was all classic Priest, no new tracks, no Ripper songs, with a bit of a dodgy, garish, cheap-looking stage set, although Rob had some over-the-top leather and chrome finery to lug around on his aging back. June 2, 2004, in Hanover, Germany, marked the first show with Rob back on the bike, with a bevy of European festival dates filling up the month.

Next up, commencing in July, was Ozzfest, Priest co-headlining with Black Sabbath, sup-

port coming from Slayer, Hatebreed, Black Label Society, Slipknot, Superjoint Ritual and Dimmu Borgir. Numerous different configurations handled a number of off-dates throughout America, with Slayer being a near constant at these shows. Mused an amusingly verbose Rob, looking back at this leg, "You know the kind of legacy that we carry with us. There's still this massive buzz about the reunion. Those dates that we did in the summer for Europe and Ozzfest were more or less an acknowledgment, a thank-you to the fans for their unwavering support. That's why we dropped tools in the studio and ran out on the road to do those shows, because the fans were just going crazy — they didn't want to wait until 2005. I think that proved to be a really important moment for us. It solidified a lot of things between Priest and the fans that we have all over the world."

At a show in Camden, New Jersey, on August 26, Rob reprised a role he last played a dozen years earlier — singer for the mighty Sabbath. Basically Ozzy came down with bronchitis, with a few additional shows set to be truncated or cancelled altogether. It was just after Rob's birthday, and he had received a call from Sharon Osbourne, thinking she was checking whether he had received his birthday present from Oz and herself: luggage festooned with the skull and crossbones. Instead, she asked if Rob could sing with the Sabs that very night. Halford dutifully stepped in and performed eight very old Sabbath chestnuts, much to the surprise of the Tweeter Center crowd.

The Retribution tour supporting the new album kicked off in Europe on February 23, 2005, with In Flames supporting. Beamed Rob, at the time gearing up for what would be arguably the band's classiest, most expensive-looking stage set to date, "We're in the middle of the full stage production at the moment; we're in the big sound stage here in London and it's just sensational. I think what we're doing here is just restating the expectations that I think everybody looks forward to from Priest for our big release, *Angel of* . . . I nearly said *Angel of Production* [laughs]. It's really

Chris Casella

important for us to maintain the tradition that the band has had forever, about going out to the stages around the world with these massive performances. We're just bringing as much as we can out, physically, just to let everybody see that the power and the glory and the majesty of the band is still as valuable and important as it ever was for us. It's time to bring back all of that incredible excitement and energy that always comes with a new release. That, again, is part of the history of the band, when we take out a new release, we have to wrap that in with all of the other great Priest classics and just pull out all the stops and put on a phenomenal, memorable stage show.

"It's very hard work. When you see it, it should look strong and powerful and should run seamlessly from start to finish, but it's an enormous amount of energy and coordination, not only with just the band, but the crew. It's not just the five people onstage. As you know, there's a tremendous amount of activity going on around us. It's that side of it that really is vital to making it run like clockwork. We've just had two weeks of solid rehearsals with the material in the studio in the Midlands where we did *Angel of Retribution*, mucking in the brand new songs and the Priest classics. What we're doing now, for the next three days, is just taking all of that material and putting it into set pieces of action that happen onstage, be it the bike or the other special effects that we're bringing out this year. We have another sensational light show and we've got all of these other bits and pieces going on that we hope are fresh and new for everybody."

Mid-March, the band hit the U.K. with Scorpions as support. Priest continued on back into Europe with U.K. doomsters Paradise Lost filling the undercard — a Polish date set for April 6th was cancelled when the Pope died. May saw the band in Japan for seven dates, which produced the aforementioned *Rising in the East* DVD. June and July had the band back in North America for outdoor shed shows supported by Queensryche, while the first half of September was filled with Mexican and South American dates, Whitesnake in tow. By late September, the band was back in North America for dates with Anthrax, always big fans of the Priest. Finally, come late November and early December, the band hit Eastern Europe and Russia.

And then the roar would subside. Judas Priest would spend all of 2006 contemplating their next move, grappling with the idea of a new record, in quiet, personal thoughts of family, and indeed, careers outside the fold, in wait for what looks to be a crazy end to 2007.

Greg Olma

25

"IN HAPPY METAL LAND"

– Epilogue

Eduardo Greif

Jayne Andrews, assistant manager for the Priest — but to the band's fans, much more, their voice when they are away — had done an excellent job keeping the lid on movements within the Priest camp as 2007 progressed. Essentially, she told us the guys were hard at work on the new album, which has been the story since early 2006, additional information being that the album has been slated for a late 2007 release.

Chris Casella

Chris Casella

The second Priest album with Rob back in the band has been slated to be a concept album on the life of Nostradamus. "All the Nostradamus writing sessions are completed," divulged Rob in late October of '06, "and Ken and Glenn are in the studio at the moment doing their bits. That's going to take a while because it is just massive. I have the bulk of the lyrics sketched out. I've just come back to San Diego for a little bit of a break and to support this big slew of Halford reissues. I am working on my Nostradamus lyrics as we speak. On this recent trip, I can't remember how long I was in England; it was over a month. The writing sessions have taken about three months, much like they did for *Angel of Retribution*. There are still ideas coming up for Nostradamus all the time, but the bulk of it is done."

"Isn't it great?" beamed Halford. "It's our first ever concept album/metal opera. We are just so stoked about that. After the critically acclaimed *Angel of Retribution* and the success

Chris Casella

Chris Casella

the metal fans gave us for that record, it would've been an even bigger task to go in and do another studio album. And then Nostradamus raised his head and we all went, 'Oh my God, this is unbelievable. Did Nostradamus prophesize that Judas Priest would be doing a metal opera about his life in 2007?' It is so cool, isn't it? We are just immersed in the land and world of Nostradamus right now. It's incredible. Our feeling in Priest with Nostradamus was that the fans have been

DID NOSTRADAMUS PROPHESIZE THAT JUDAS PRIEST WOULD BE DOING A METAL OPERA ABOUT HIS LIFE IN 2007?

David Bridge

THE MAGIC FORMULA OF THIS BAND IS THE WRITING FORMULA.

clamoring for a concept album for as long as we've been together. Some people think that *Painkiller* was a concept album. Some people think that *Sad Wings of Destiny* was a concept album. Both of them were not. But this is a moment now, three decades later, where we can put all that thinking in one place, and create this one big metal opera called Nostradamus. And everybody will be happy — in happy metal land we hope!"

Further tidbits released include the news that it was manager Bill Curbishley who came up with the idea, floating it at a band meeting

Chris "Stew" Stewart

in Estonia — Curbishley had worked with The Who on that band's *Tommy* opus. As well, the band had 90 minutes of music written, and the songs would flow without silence between the tracks. Approximately 20 events in Nostradamus' life would be explored, Rob figuring the legend was perfect for heavy metal treatment, given the mysticism, the alchemy, the trials and tribulations of the seer's years. Halford also hinted at musical horizons widened through orchestration, keyboards and choirs, as well as a live set that will include many costume changes for the Metal God, as well as elaborate theatrical settings and possibly live actors.

Added Tipton, "The most exciting thing for me and for Rob and Ken is, until we set foot in the same room, we don't know what's going to happen. I've put a lot of ideas down, I've been fairly prolific, and I'm sure Ken has, and Rob. It's just so exciting when we get together and we kick ideas around, and then the room lights up, and we're onto something. The magic formula of this band is the writing formula."

The Halford reissues Rob alluded to was a campaign exclusive to Apple iTunes and

halfordmusic.com commencing in November of '06, through his new label MGE, or Metal God Entertainment. Flagshipped by a strapping, lively, solid new Halford track called "Forgotten Generation," the program includes the three Halford albums to date (*Resurrection*, *Live Insurrection* and *Crucible*), along with *Metal God Essentials Vol. 1*, *Fight's K5: The War of Words Demos*, and the *Silent Screams: The Singles* EP.

In mid-2006, Metal Mike revealed that the Halford band was still percolating along under the radar, even if it's likely at this point that plans will be put on ice to let Priest shine their light. "Well, there was never a time that Rob, or anybody in the band or management said Halford is done, i.e. 'It's over folks.' And it was left like that for the exact reason that we all knew we would do another Halford album in the near future. Some of the media jumped to conclusions, but no one else except Rob, the band and the management were there in our last meetings. Our band's goal was to clearly make another incredible album, when the time is right. And this time is right now.

"The entire band will be doing the writing. Rob, myself and Roy Z might throw some initial ideas together first, but then the whole band — including Bobby Jarzombek and Mike Davis — will bash out the song structures and everyone will make suggestions for proper arrangements, etc. We never go into the studio cold. We always rehearse the material to see if it feels right to us first. If it really, honestly does, then we are ready to record. If not, then the shit goes into the trash and we start all over until it does. In Halford, we often, but not always, work on the musical bits first, then Rob grabs what he feels moves him and off he goes into a dark corner of the room, writing away. It's very cool to do this; as a musician you have a great challenge of writing something great enough to move the Metal God so he gets inspired, and as we all know, ultimately he writes great shit. Time will really tell the specifics, but I will tell you this: expect a fucking crushing metal album. The reason this album is even happening is that, in this band, we enjoy playing metal together. There is an enormous amount of respect and friendship between all of the members of the Halford band, no childish games, bullshit, backstabbing or anyone being a little bitch. We are all men, and we come to this with pure fucking hearts, ready to write good music. This is the core, and out of that grows music that speaks to people, and to us. We are here because we want to be, Rob wants to be, and because there is a killer album within all this."

But Metal Mike and Halford will now likely have to cool their heels, as Judas Priest plan their most audacious move ever. Will the attempt fall flat with fans, or will the band produce a legendary, unified package on par with Queensryche's *Operation: Mindcrime*, that gold standard of metal concept records? Whatever the case, Priest certainly have nothing left to prove, having conquered the world of heavy metal both artistically and commercially, by this writer's estimation, emphatically at two different junctures. All that's left is an induc-

Ken Hower (RacerXBand.com)

tion into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, something for which the band has been eligible now for eight years. One wonders if the studs and leather and motorcycles might diminish the band's accomplishments in the eyes of the voters for interminable years to come. It is of little concern to Priest's fans, who are canny enough to realize that induction could be a long way away for anybody crazy enough to enthusiastically champion themselves as heavy metal, head to toe, irony be damned.

Millions of fans have their own magic Priest "moments," and it is to the credit of the band that those moments can take on so many incongruous dimensions. Here's hoping the band's brave exploration of the conceptual provides a wholly new admirable experience altogether, and the millions who have enjoyed Priest in their own private way can count among their ranks additional headbanging friends newly faithful to the Metal Gods.

NOTES ON SELECT IMAGES

p. 8	Al Atkins in the 1990s (left). Al Atkins and Judas Priest expert James Powell (right).
p. 22–23	From the *Rocka Rolla* tour program.
p. 54	(Left to right) Les Binks, Glenn Tipton, Rob Halford, Ian Hill, and K.K. Downing.
p. 86–87	(Top row) Bootleg live albums.
p. 98	Bootleg live album.
p. 106	(Left column) T-shirts from the *British Steel* tour.
p. 108	(Top left) Tour program.
p. 109	Pop-up page from tour program.
p. 113	(Top left) Retail display for *Point of Entry*.
p. 119	(Top left) Promotional postcard for U.S. tour.
p. 120	(Bottom right) *Point of Entry* tour program.
p. 127	(Left) Retail display for *Screaming for Vengeance*.
p. 142	Cover of *Judas Priest: The Early Years* biography.
p. 150	Retail displays for *Defenders of the Faith*.
p. 165	Bootleg live album.
p. 175	Racer X, with Scott Travis on the far left.
p. 191	Retail display for *Ram it Down*.
p. 214	Newspaper clippings of a *USA Today* cover story on the subliminal message trial.
p. 244	(Left to right) K.K. Downing, Scott Travis, Tim "Ripper" Owens, K.K. Downing, and Ian Hill.
p. 257–58	Advance promotional CDs for reissue of *Baptizm of Fire* and *Edge of the World*.
p. 361	Rob Halford (top) and Scott Travis (bottom) sign autographs for Japanese fans.

DISCOGRAPHY

As you've noticed, we've included a basic discography of each album as part of the title page for the relevant chapter — consider it a handy, dandy reference guide as you headbang along. Of course, there are variants for territories, etc., but that is explained, for the most part, in each chapter. Of note, since finishing the book, the new and excellent Halford compilations have emerged, but I'm demurring on inclusion on the grounds that they are not Priest — cool? So yes, back to business, here are what you'd have to call the "official Judas Priest compilations."

The Best of Judas Priest (Gull, February '78)

Side 1: Rocka Rolla, Never Satisfied, Dying to Meet You, Diamonds and Rust

Side 2: Victim of Changes, Island of Domination, Deceiver, The Ripper, Epitaph, One for the Road

Notes: Yes, it's Gull, who reissued their two Priest albums worth of material relentlessly, and often at times, verging on willful confusion. But this is the perennial and ubiquitous early Priest compilation. A notable inclusion is an earlier version of Diamonds and Rust, recorded during the *Sad Wings of Destiny* sessions. Gull CD issue (Gull's only spot of Priest on CD, as issued directly as Gull product) includes Epitaph and One for the Road. Transluxe CD reissue included a John Hinch interview, but not the Gull CD issue tracks.

Hero, Hero (Gull, '81)

Side 1: Prelude, Tyrant, Rocka Rolla, One for the Road, Victim of Changes

Side 2: Dying to Meet You, Never Satisfied, Dreamer Deceiver, Deceiver

Side 3: Winter, Deep Freeze, Winter Retreat, Cheater

Side 4: Diamonds and Rust, Run of the Mill, Genocide, Caviar and Meths

Notes: A Rodger Bain remix of the early material, with some fairly significant twists and turns. Some CD reissues, however, don't use the remixes.

Priest, Live & Rare (Epic, March '98)

Beyond the Realms of Death, White Heat, Red Hot, Starbreaker, Breaking the Law, Living After Midnight, The Green Manalishi (with the Two-Pronged Crown), Breaking the Law, You've Got Another Thing Comin', Private Property, Turbo Lover (Hi-Octane Mix)

Notes: A bit of a deceptive title, as the (short) album consists of one rare track and nine live tracks (although those are rare as well). Issued in the U.K. and Japan only, and not considered by the band as a true part of the catalog.

Metal Works '73–'93 (Columbia, April '93)

Disc 1: The Hellion, Electric Eye, Victim of Changes, Painkiller, Eat Me Alive, Devil's Child, Dissident Aggressor, Delivering the Goods, Exciter, Breaking the Law, Hell Bent for Leather, Blood Red Skies, Metal Gods, Before the Dawn, Turbo Lover, Ram it Down, Metal Meltdown

Disc 2: Screaming for Vengeance, You've Got Another Thing Comin', Beyond the Realms of Death, Solar Angels, Bloodstone, Desert Plains, Wild Nights, Hot & Crazy Days, Heading out to the Highway, Living After Midnight, A Touch of Evil, The Rage, Night Comes Down, Sinner, Freewheel Burning, Night Crawler

Metalogy (Sony, May '04)

Disc 1: Never Satisfied, Deceiver, Tyrant, Victim of Changes (live), Diamonds and Rust (live), Starbreaker (live), Sinner, Let Us Prey, Dissident Aggressor, Exciter, Beyond the Realms of Death, Better by You, Better than Me, Invader, Stained Class, The Green Manalishi (with the Two-Pronged Crown) (live)

Disc 2: Killing Machine, Evening Star, Take on the World, Delivering the Goods, Evil Fantasies, Hell Bent for Leather, Breaking the Law, Living After Midnight, Rapid Fire, Metal Gods, Grinder (live), The Rage, Heading out to the Highway, Hot Rockin' (live), Troubleshooter, Solar Angels, Desert Plains, The Hellion (live), Electric Eye (live), Screaming for Vengeance

Disc 3: Riding on the Wind, Bloodstone, You've Got Another Thing Comin', Devil's Child, Freewheel Burning, Jawbreaker, The Sentinel, Love Bites (live), Eat Me Alive, Some Heads Are Gonna Roll, Rock Hard Ride Free, Night Comes Down, Turbo Lover, Private Property, Parental Guidance, Out in the Cold, Heart of a Lion (demo)

Disc 4: Ram it Down, Heavy Metal, Come and Get it, Blood Red Skies, Painkiller, Between the Hammer & the Anvil, A Touch of Evil, Metal Meltdown, Night Crawler, All Guns Blazing, Jugulator, Blood Stained, Machine Man, Feed on Me

DVD: The Hellion, Electric Eye, Riding on the Wind, Heading out to the Highway, Metal Gods, Bloodstone, Breaking the Law, The Sinner, Desert Plains, The Ripper, Diamonds and Rust, Devil's Child, Screaming for Vengeance, You've Got Another Thing Comin', Victim of Changes, Living After Midnight, The Green Manalishi (with the Two-Pronged Crown), Hell Bent for Leather

SOURCES

Advocate, The.

Atkins, Al. Interview with the author. June 1998.

Atkins, Al. Interview with the author. February 17, 2006.

Banali, Frankie. Interview with the author. September 20, 2006.

Bashe, Philip. "Face to Face with Judas Priest." *Circus*. 1982.

Begai, Carl. "Judas Priest: Second Coming." *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #20, November/December 1997.

Bloom, Michael. "Sin After Sin album review." *Circus*. 1977.

Bromley, Adrian. "Victim of Changes." *Unrestrained!*. Issue 26.

Catley, Bob. Interview with the author. March 14, 2007.

Chlasciak, Mike. Interview with the author. 2004.

Downing, K.K. Interview with the author. February 11, 1998.

Downing, K.K. Interview with the author. June 15, 2004.

Downing, K.K. Interview with the author. March 11, 2007.

Duff, S.L. "Halford's Heroes." *Rip*. April 1994.

Eriksson, Mike. "Interview with Glenn Tipton." *Atlantis Online*. May 7, 1986.

Erna, Sully. Interview with the author. June 13, 2006.

Fachblatt Music Magazine. "Interview with Rob Halford." September 1976.

Friedman, Marty. Interview with the author. March 12, 2007.

Galley, Tom. Interview with the author. March 16, 2007.

Gett, Steve. "Photo Journal: Priestmania The Rage in Japan." *Circus*. November 30, 1984.

Gilbert, Paul. Interview with the author. April 5, 2007.

Glover, Roger. Interview with the author. 1999.

Goldstein, Toby. "Judas Priest: The Metal Conquerors." *Hit Parader*. #231, December 1983.

Goldstein, Toby. "Judas Priest Eaten Alive! The Gunpoint Confessionals." *Creem*. Vol. 16, No. 2, July 1984.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. 1998.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. July 30, 2000.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. November 17, 2000.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. February 27, 2001.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. April 13, 2003.

Halford, Rob. Interview with the author. November 11, 2005.

Harding, R.J. "Judas Priest: Living to Rock." *Hit Parader*. #265, October 1986.

Hegg, Johan. Interview with the author. October 5, 2006.

Henderson, Tim. "Fight." *M.E.A.T.* #45, September 1993.

Henderson, Tim. "Judas Priest." *M.E.A.T.* #43, June 1993.

Henderson, Tim. "Judas Priest: No Life 'til Leather!" *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #14, September/October 1996.

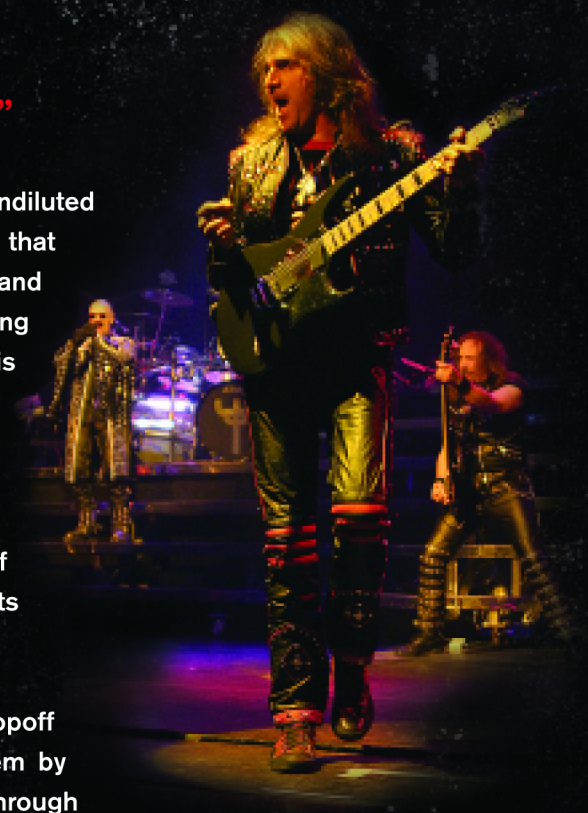
Henderson, Tim. "Halford: Delivering the Goods!" *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #61, July 2002.

Henderson, Tim. "Halford: Unleashed in the South!" *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #51, June 2001.

Henderson, Tim. "Halford: Fall to Your Knees

and Repent if You Please!" *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #43, September 2000.
Henderson, Tim. "We're Living in a World of 'Power, Speed and Aggression.'" *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #83, November 2004.
Henderson, Tim. "The Angel Lands on Earth." *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #87, May 2005.
Henderson, Tim. "Roy Z: Priests, Maidens and Gypsies." *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*. #88, June 2005.
Hill, Ian. Interview with the author. February 11, 1998.
Hill, Ian. Interview with the author. August 26, 2001.
Hill, Ian. Interview with the author. February 1, 2002.
Hill, Ian. Interview with the author. December 2, 2003.
Hinch, John. "The Best of Judas Priest. Insight Series Interview with Original Judas Priest Drummer John Hinch." *Transluxe Records*.
Judas Priest Info Pages. *Steel And Leather Productions*. www.members.firstinter.net/markster/MENU.html
Lafon, Mitch. "Interview with Ripper Owens." 2003.
Langen, Victor. Interview with the author. March 1, 2007.
Lowery, John. Interview with the author. September 10, 2004.
Lowery, John. Interview with the author. April 14, 2006.
McCormick, Moira. "Growing Up the Hard Way with Judas Priest." *Circus*. #318, August 31, 1986.
Metal Hammer. "Interview with Rob Halford." 1988.
Nalbandian, Bob. "Interview with K.K. Downing." *Hardradio*. www.hardradio.com.
Nicholson, Kris. "Sad Wings of Destiny album review." *Rolling Stone*. September 23, 1976.
Owens, Ripper. Interview with the author. February 11, 1998.
Owns, Ripper. Interview with the author. August 1998.
Owens, Ripper. Interview with the author. June 20, 2001.
P., Daniela. "Interview with Rob Halford." *Daniela's Attic*. Feb. 2, 1991.
Paul, Vinnie. Interview with the author. May 1, 2007.
Phillips, Simon. Interview with the author. February 17, 1999.
Rock Hard. "Interview with K.K. Downing." 2003.
Rose, Jennifer. "Into the Pit: Rob Halford and Fight Tear it up on Tour!" *Live Wire*. Vol. 4, No. 5.
Rose, Jennifer. "Bow to the Metal God!" *Live Wire*. Vol. 5, No. 9.
Snider, Dee. Interview with the author. August 1, 2006.
Scheepers, Ralf. Interview with the author. May 1999.
Stone, Adrianne. "Fighting for Humanity." *Rip*. October 1995.
Storace, Marc. Interview with the author. November 4, 2006.
Summers Dorland, Jodi. "On the Set with . . . Judas Priest." *Hit Parader*. #250, July 1985.
Tipton, Glenn. Interview with the author. February 1, 2002.
Tipton, Glenn. Interview with the author. February 14, 2006.
Travis, Scott. Interview with the author. October 30, 2005.
Tsangarides, Chris. Interview with the author. February 16, 2006.
Turbo Fax. "Interview with Rob Halford." 1986.
Victor, Tommy. Interview with the author. June 9, 2006.
Wright, Jeb. "Interview with Rob Halford." *Classic Rock Revisited*. www.classicrockrevisited.com.
Wright, Jeb. "Interview with Ian Hill." *Classic Rock Revisited*. www.classicrockrevisited.com.
Z, Roy. Interview with the author. 2004.

"FALL TO YOUR KNEES AND REPENT IF YOU PLEASE!"



When the world thinks of heavy metal in its pure, potent, undiluted form, it is none other than the Metal Gods, Judas Priest, that instantly come to mind. Chrome and black leather, studs and whips and chains, a chopper on stage to announce the coming . . . these are the tools of the trade for Rob Halford and his legendary band of Birmingham bashers.

"Breaking the Law," "Living After Midnight," "Electric Eye," "Turbo Lover," "Victim of Changes," and "You've Got Another Thing Comin" — these songs are woven into the fabric of metal's wild ride, Judas Priest having been there since its origins, revving up crowds as superstars for over 30 years.

Lifelong fan and preeminent metal historian Martin Popoff examines the Priest's rich legacy, album by album, anthem by anthem, recounting the band's rocky ride through the '70s, through the gold and platinum records of the '80s, their shocking split with Halford in the mid '90s, and his triumphant return in 2003. *Judas Priest: Heavy Metal Painkillers* draws on Popoff's exhaustive interviews with metal's proudest ambassadors — Rob Halford, Glenn Tipton, K.K. Downing, and Ian Hill. Alongside the Metal Gods' firsthand accounts, the band's gleaming steel imagery springs to life with a full-color cornucopia of photos and memorabilia . . . a Priestly feast for the electric eye.

"Martin has the most thorough knowledge of heavy metal of anybody I've ever met."
— Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider

MARTIN POPOFF is a full-time music journalist specializing in heavy metal, classic rock, and memorabilia collecting. His recent book on Black Sabbath, *Doom Let Loose*, has been praised by the entire band. *Judas Priest: Heavy Metal Painkillers* is Martin's twentieth book.

ECW Press • $24.95 U.S., $24.95 CDN
Distributed in the U.S. by Independent Publishers Group
and in Canada by Jaguar Book Group
ecwpress.com

ISBN-13: 978-155022-784-0
ISBN-10: 1-55022-784-X

9 781550 227840 52495